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James Peterson

THE WORKS OF

JOHN M. SYNGE

VOLUME ONE

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In the Shadow of the Glen

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

A Play in One Act

First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, October 8th, 1903.

PERSONS

Dan Burke (*farmer and herd*) . George Roberts

Nora Burke (*his wife*) . . . Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh

Micheal Dara (*a young herd*) . P. J. Kelly

A Tramp . . . . . W. G. Fay

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

A Play in One Act

First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, October 8th, 1903.

Scene.—*The last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow.*

(*Cottage kitchen; turf fire on the right; a bed near it against the wall with a body lying on it covered with a sheet. A door is at the other end of the room, with a low table near it, and stools, or wooden chairs. There are a couple of glasses on the table, and a bottle of whisky, as if for a wake, with two cups, a tea-pot, and a home-made cake. There is another small door near the bed. Nora Burke is moving about the room, settling a few things, and lighting candles on the table, looking now and then at the bed with an uneasy look. Some one knocks softly at the door. She takes up a*

stocking with money from the table and puts it in her pocket. Then she opens the door.)

TRAMP

Outside.

Good evening to you, lady of the house.

NORA

Good evening, kindly stranger, it's a wild night, God help you, to be out in the rain falling.

TRAMP

It is, surely, and I walking to Brittas from the Aughrim fair.

NORA

Is it walking on your feet, stranger?

TRAMP

On my two feet, lady of the house, and when I saw the light below I thought maybe if you'd a sup of new milk and a quiet decent corner where a man could sleep (*he looks in past her and sees the dead man*). The Lord have mercy on us all!

NORA

It doesn't matter anyway, stranger, come in out of the rain.

TRAMP

Coming in slowly and going towards the bed.

Is it departed he is?

NORA

It is, stranger. He's after dying on me, God forgive him, and there I am now with a hundred sheep beyond on the hills, and no turf drawn for the winter.

TRAMP

Looking closely at the dead man.

It's a queer look is on him for a man that's dead.

NORA

Half-humorously.

He was always queer, stranger, and I suppose them that's queer and they living men will be queer bodies after.

TRAMP

Isn't it a great wonder you're letting him lie there, and he is not tidied, or laid out itself?

NORA

Coming to the bed.

I was afeard, stranger, for he put a black

curse on me this morning if I'ld touch his body the time he'ld die sudden, or let any one touch it except his sister only, and it's ten miles away she lives in the big glen over the hill.

TRAMP

Looking at her and nodding slowly.

It's a queer story he wouldn't let his own wife touch him, and he dying quiet in his bed.

NORA

He was an old man, and an odd man, stranger, and it's always up on the hills he was thinking thoughts in the dark mist. (*She pulls back a bit of the sheet.*) Lay your hand on him now, and tell me if it's cold he is surely.

TRAMP

Is it getting the curse on me you'ld be, woman of the house? I wouldn't lay my hand on him for the Lough Nahanagan and it filled with gold.

NORA

Looking uneasily at the body.

Maybe cold would be no sign of death with the like of him, for he was always cold, every day since I knew him, — and every night, stranger. — (*she covers up his face and comes*

away from the bed); but I'm thinking it's dead he is surely, for he's complaining a while back of a pain in his heart, and this morning, the time he was going off to Brittas for three days or four, he was taken with a sharp turn. Then he went into his bed and he was saying it was destroyed he was, the time the shadow was going up through the glen, and when the sun set on the bog beyond he made a great lep, and let a great cry out of him, and stiffened himself out the like of a dead sheep.

TRAMP

Crosses himself.

God rest his soul.

NORA

Pouring him out a glass of whisky.

Maybe that would do you better than the milk of the sweetest cow in County Wicklow.

TRAMP

The Almighty God reward you, and may it be to your good health.

He drinks.

NORA

Giving him a pipe and tobacco.

I've no pipes saving his own, stranger, but they're sweet pipes to smoke.

TRAMP

Thank you kindly, lady of the house.

NORA

Sit down now, stranger, and be taking your rest.

TRAMP

Filling a pipe and looking about the room.

I've walked a great way through the world, lady of the house, and seen great wonders, but I never seen a wake till this day with fine spirits, and good tobacco, and the best of pipes, and no one to taste them but a woman only.

NORA

Didn't you hear me say it was only after dying on me he was when the sun went down, and how would I go out into the glen and tell the neighbours, and I a lone woman with no house near me?

TRAMP

Drinking.

There's no offence, lady of the house?

NORA

No offence in life, stranger. How would the like of you, passing in the dark night, know

the lonesome way I was with no house near me at all?

TRAMP

Sitting down.

I knew rightly. (*He lights his pipe so that there is a sharp light beneath his haggard face.*) And I was thinking, and I coming in through the door, that it's many a lone woman would be afeard of the like of me in the dark night, in a place wouldn't be as lonesome as this place, where there aren't two living souls would see the little light you have shining from the glass.

NORA

Slowly.

I'm thinking many would be afeard, but I never knew what way I'd be afeard of beggar or bishop or any man of you at all. (*She looks towards the window and lowers her voice.*) It's other things than the like of you, stranger, would make a person afeard.

TRAMP

Looking round with a half-shudder.

It is surely, God help us all!

NORA

Looking at him for a moment with curiosity.

You're saying that, stranger, as if you were easy afeard.

TRAMP

Speaking mournfully.

Is it myself, lady of the house, that does be walking round in the long nights, and crossing the hills when the fog is on them, the time a little stick would seem as big as your arm, and a rabbit as big as a bay horse, and a stack of turf as big as a towering church in the city of Dublin? If myself was easily afeard, I'm telling you, it's long ago I'ld have been locked into the Richmond Asylum, or maybe have run up into the back hills with nothing on me but an old shirt, and been eaten with crows the like of Patch Darcy — the Lord have mercy on him — in the year that's gone.

NORA

With interest.

You knew Darcy?

TRAMP

Wasn't I the last one heard his living voice in the whole world?

NORA

There were great stories of what was heard at that time, but would any one believe the things they do be saying in the glen?

TRAMP

It was no lie, lady of the house. . . . I was passing below on a dark night the like of this night, and the sheep were lying under the ditch and every one of them coughing, and choking, like an old man, with the great rain and the fog. Then I heard a thing talking — queer talk, you wouldn't believe at all, and you out of your dreams, — and "Merciful God," says I, "if I begin hearing the like of that voice out of the thick mist, I'm destroyed surely." Then I run, and I run, and I run, till I was below in Rathvanna. I got drunk that night, I got drunk in the morning, and drunk the day after, — I was coming from the races beyond — and the third day they found Darcy. . . . Then I knew it was himself I was after hearing, and I wasn't afeard any more.

NORA

Speaking sorrowfully and slowly.

God spare Darcy, he'ld always look in here and he passing up or passing down, and it's

very lonesome I was after him a long while (*she looks over at the bed and lowers her voice, speaking very clearly,*) and then I got happy again — if it's ever happy we are, stranger, — for I got used to being lonesome.

A short pause; then she stands up.

NORA

Was there any one on the last bit of the road, stranger, and you coming from Aughrim?

TRAMP

There was a young man with a drift of mountain ewes, and he running after them this way and that.

NORA

With a half-smile.

Far down, stranger?

TRAMP

A piece only.

She fills the kettle and puts it on the fire.

NORA

Maybe, if you're not easy afeard, you'ld stay here a short while alone with himself.

TRAMP

I would surely. A man that's dead can do no hurt.

NORA

Speaking with a sort of constraint.

I'm going a little back to the west, stranger, for himself would go there one night and another and whistle at that place, and then the young man you're after seeing — a kind of a farmer has come up from the sea to live in a cottage beyond — would walk round to see if there was a thing we'ld have to be done, and I'm wanting him this night, the way he can go down into the glen when the sun goes up and tell the people that himself is dead.

TRAMP

Looking at the body in the sheet.

It's myself will go for him, lady of the house, and let you not be destroying yourself with the great rain.

NORA

You wouldn't find your way, stranger, for there's a small path only, and it running up between two sluigs where an ass and cart would be drowned. (*She puts a shawl over*

her head.) Let you be making yourself easy, and saying a prayer for his soul, and it's not long I'll be coming again.

TRAMP

Moving uneasily.

Maybe if you'd a piece of a grey thread and a sharp needle — there's great safety in a needle, lady of the house — I'ld be putting a little stitch here and there in my old coat, the time I'll be praying for his soul, and it going up naked to the saints of God.

NORA

Takes a needle and thread from the front of her dress and gives it to him.

There's the needle, stranger, and I'm thinking you won't be lonesome, and you used to the back hills, for isn't a dead man itself more company than to be sitting alone, and hearing the winds crying, and you not knowing on what thing your mind would stay?

TRAMP

Slowly.

It's true, surely, and the Lord have mercy on us all!

Nora goes out. The Tramp begins

stitching one of the tags in his coat, saying the "De Profundis" under his breath. In an instant the sheet is drawn slowly down, and Dan Burke looks out. The Tramp moves uneasily, then looks up, and springs to his feet with a movement of terror.

DAN

With a hoarse voice.

Don't be afeard, stranger; a man that's dead can do no hurt.

TRAMP

Trembling.

I meant no harm, your honour; and won't you leave me easy to be saying a little prayer for your soul?

A long whistle is heard outside.

DAN

Sitting up in his bed and speaking fiercely.

Ah, the devil mend her. . . . Do you hear that, stranger? Did ever you hear another woman could whistle the like of that with two fingers in her mouth? (*He looks at the table*

hurriedly.) I'm destroyed with the drouth, and let you bring me a drop quickly before herself will come back.

TRAMP

Doubtfully.

Is it not dead you are?

DAN

How would I be dead, and I as dry as a baked bone, stranger?

TRAMP

Pouring out the whisky.

What will herself say if she smells the stuff on you, for I'm thinking it's not for nothing you're letting on to be dead?

DAN

It is not, stranger, but she won't be coming near me at all, and it's not long now I'll be letting on, for I've a cramp in my back, and my hip's asleep on me, and there's been the devil's own fly itching my nose. It's near dead I was wanting to sneeze, and you blathering about the rain, and Darcy (*bitterly*) — the devil choke him — and the towering church. (*Crying out impatiently.*) Give me that

whisky. Would you have herself come back before I taste a drop at all?

Tramp gives him the glass.

DAN

After drinking.

Go over now to that cupboard, and bring me a black stick you'll see in the west corner by the wall.

TRAMP

Taking a stick from the cupboard.

Is it that?

DAN

It is, stranger; it's a long time I'm keeping that stick for I've a bad wife in the house.

TRAMP

With a queer look.

Is it herself, master of the house, and she a grand woman to talk?

DAN

It's herself, surely, it's a bad wife she is — a bad wife for an old man, and I'm getting old, God help me, though I've an arm to me still. (*He takes the stick in his hand.*) Let you wait now a short while, and it's a great sight you'll

see in this room in two hours or three. (*He stops to listen.*) Is that somebody above?

TRAMP

Listening.

There's a voice speaking on the path.

DAN

Put that stick here in the bed and smooth the sheet the way it was lying. (*He covers himself up hastily.*) Be falling to sleep now and don't let on you know anything, or I'll be having your life. I wouldn't have told you at all but it's destroyed with the drouth I was.

TRAMP

Covering his head.

Have no fear, master of the house. What is it I know of the like of you that I'ld be saying a word or putting out my hand to stay you at all?

He goes back to the fire, sits down on a stool with his back to the bed and goes on stitching his coat.

DAN

Under the sheet, querulously.

Stranger.

TRAMP

Quickly.

Whisht, whisht. Be quiet I'm telling you, they're coming now at the door.

Nora comes in with Micheal Dara, a tall, innocent young man behind her.

NORA

I wasn't long at all, stranger, for I met himself on the path.

TRAMP

You were middling long, lady of the house.

NORA

There was no sign from himself?

TRAMP

No sign at all, lady of the house.

NORA

To Micheal.

Go over now and pull down the sheet, and look on himself, Micheal Dara, and you'll see it's the truth I'm telling you.

MICHEAL

I will not, Nora, I do be afeard of the dead.

He sits down on a stool next the table

facing the tramp. Nora puts the kettle on a lower hook of the pot-hooks, and piles turf under it.

NORA

Turning to Tramp.

Will you drink a sup of tea with myself and the young man, stranger, or (*speaking more persuasively*) will you go into the little room and stretch yourself a short while on the bed, I'm thinking it's destroyed you are walking the length of that way in the great rain.

TRAMP

Is it to go away and leave you, and you having a wake, lady of the house? I will not surely. (*He takes a drink from his glass which he has beside him.*) And it's none of your tea I'm asking either.

He goes on stitching.
Nora makes the tea.

MICHEAL

After looking at the tramp rather scornfully for a moment.

That's a poor coat you have, God help you, and I'm thinking it's a poor tailor you are with it.

TRAMP

If it's a poor tailor I am, I'm thinking it's a poor herd does be running back and forward after a little handful of ewes the way I seen yourself running this day, young fellow, and you coming from the fair.

Nora comes back to the table.

NORA

To Micheal in a low voice.

Let you not mind him at all, Micheal Dara, he has a drop taken and it's soon he'll be falling asleep.

MICHEAL

It's no lie he's telling, I was destroyed surely. They were that wilful they were running off into one man's bit of oats, and another man's bit of hay, and tumbling into the red bogs till it's more like a pack of old goats than sheep they were. Mountain ewes is a queer breed, Nora Burke, and I'm not used to them at all.

NORA

Settling the tea things.

There's no one can drive a mountain ewe but the men do be reared in the Glen Malure, I've heard them say, and above by Rathvanna,

and the Glen Imaal, men the like of Patch Darcy, God spare his soul, who would walk through five hundred sheep and miss one of them, and he not reckoning them at all.

MICHEAL

Uneasily.

Is it the man went queer in his head the year that's gone?

NORA

It is surely.

TRAMP

Plaintively.

That was a great man, young fellow, a great man I'm telling you. There was never a lamb from his own ewes he wouldn't know before it was marked, and he'ld run from this to the city of Dublin and never catch for his breath.

NORA

Turning round quickly.

He was a great man surely, stranger, and isn't it a grand thing when you hear a living man saying a good word of a dead man, and he mad dying?

TRAMP

It's the truth I'm saying, God spare his soul.

He puts the needle under the collar of his coat, and settles himself to sleep in the chimney-corner. Nora sits down at the table; their backs are turned to the bed.

MICHEAL

Looking at her with a queer look.

I heard tell this day, Nora Burke, that it was on the path below Patch Darcy would be passing up and passing down, and I heard them say he'ld never pass it night or morning without speaking with yourself.

NORA

In a low voice.

It was no lie you heard, Micheal Dara.

MICHEAL

I'm thinking it's a power of men you're after knowing if it's in a lonesome place you live itself.

NORA

Giving him his tea.

It's in a lonesome place you do have to be

talking with some one, and looking for some one, in the evening of the day, and if it's a power of men I'm after knowing they were fine men, for I was a hard child to please, and a hard girl to please (*she looks at him a little sternly*), and it's a hard woman I am to please this day, Micheal Dara, and it's no lie I'm telling you.

MICHEAL

Looking over to see that the tramp is asleep, and then pointing to the dead man.

Was it a hard woman to please you were when you took himself for your man?

NORA

What way would I live and I an old woman if I didn't marry a man with a bit of a farm, and cows on it, and sheep on the back hills?

MICHEAL

Considering.

That's true, Nora, and maybe it's no fool you were, for there's good grazing on it, if it is a lonesome place, and I'm thinking it's a good sum he's left behind.

NORA

Taking the stocking with money from her pocket, and putting it on the table.

I do be thinking in the long nights it was a big fool I was that time, Micheal Dara, for what good is a bit of a farm with cows on it, and sheep on the back hills, when you do be sitting looking out from a door the like of that door, and seeing nothing but the mists rolling down the bog, and the mists again, and they rolling up the bog, and hearing nothing but the wind crying out in the bits of broken trees were left from the great storm, and the streams roaring with the rain.

MICHEAL

Looking at her uneasily.

What is it ails you, this night, Nora Burke? I've heard tell it's the like of that talk you do hear from men, and they after being a great while on the back hills.

NORA

Putting out the money on the table.

It's a bad night, and a wild night, Micheal Dara, and isn't it a great while I am at the

foot of the back hills, sitting up here boiling food for himself, and food for the brood sow, and baking a cake when the night falls? (*She puts up the money, listlessly, in little piles on the table.*) Isn't it a long while I am sitting here in the winter and the summer, and the fine spring, with the young growing behind me and the old passing, saying to myself one time, to look on Mary Brien who wasn't that height (*holding out her hand*), and I a fine girl growing up, and there she is now with two children, and another coming on her in three months or four.

She pauses.

MICHEAL

Moving over three of the piles.

That's three pounds we have now, Nora Burke.

NORA

Continuing in the same voice.

And saying to myself another time, to look on Peggy Cavanagh, who had the lightest hand at milking a cow that wouldn't be easy, or turning a cake, and there she is now walking round on the roads, or sitting in a dirty old house, with no teeth in her mouth, and no

sense and no more hair than you'ld see on a bit of a hill and they after burning the furze from it.

MICHEAL

That's five pounds and ten notes, a good sum, surely! . . . It's not that way you'll be talking when you marry a young man, Nora Burke, and they were saying in the fair my lambs were the best lambs, and I got a grand price, for I'm no fool now at making a bargain when my lambs are good.

NORA

What was it you got?

MICHEAL

Twenty pound for the lot, Nora Burke. . . . We'ld do right to wait now till himself will be quiet awhile in the Seven Churches, and then you'll marry me in the chapel of Rathvanna, and I'll bring the sheep up on the bit of a hill you have on the back mountain, and we won't have anything we'ld be afeard to let our minds on when the mist is down.

NORA

Pouring him out some whisky.

Why would I marry you, Mike Dara?

You'll be getting old and I'll be getting old, and in a little while I'm telling you, you'll be sitting up in your bed — the way himself was sitting — with a shake in your face, and your teeth falling, and the white hair sticking out round you like an old bush where sheep do be leaping a gap.

Dan Burke sits up noiselessly from under the sheet, with his hand to his face. His white hair is sticking out round his head.

NORA

Goes on slowly without hearing him.

It's a pitiful thing to be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely. It's a queer thing to see an old man sitting up there in his bed with no teeth in him, and a rough word in his mouth, and his chin the way it would take the bark from the edge of an oak board you'ld have building a door. . . . God forgive me, Micheal Dara, we'll all be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely.

MICHEAL

It's too lonesome you are from living a long time with an old man, Nora, and you're talking again like a herd that would be coming

down from the thick mist (*he puts his arm round her*), but it's a fine life you'll have now with a young man, a fine life surely. . . .

Dan sneezes violently. Micheal tries to get to the door, but before he can do so, Dan jumps out of the bed in queer white clothes, with his stick in his hand, and goes over and puts his back against it.

MICHEAL

Son of God deliver us.

Crosses himself, and goes backward across the room.

DAN

Holding up his hand at him.

Now you'll not marry her the time I'm rotting below in the Seven Churches, and you'll see the thing I'll give you will follow you on the back mountains when the wind is high.

MICHEAL

To Nora.

Get me out of it, Nora, for the love of God. He always did what you bid him, and I'm thinking he would do it now.

NORA

Looking at the Tramp.

Is it dead he is or living?

DAN

Turning towards her.

It's little you care if it's dead or living I am, but there'll be an end now of your fine times, and all the talk you have of young men and old men, and of the mist coming up or going down. (*He opens the door.*) You'll walk out now from that door, Nora Burke, and it's not to-morrow, or the next day, or any day of your life, that you'll put in your foot through it again.

TRAMP

Standing up.

It's a hard thing you're saying for an old man, master of the house, and what would the like of her do if you put her out on the roads?

DAN

Let her walk round the like of Peggy Cavanagh below, and be begging money at the cross-road, or selling songs to the men. (*To Nora.*) Walk out now, Nora Burke, and it's soon you'll be getting old with that life, I'm

telling you; it's soon your teeth'll be falling and your head'll be the like of a bush where sheep do be leaping a gap.

He pauses: she looks round at Micheal.

MICHEAL

Timidly.

There's a fine Union below in Rathdrum.

DAN

The like of her would never go there. . . . It's lonesome roads she'll be going and hiding herself away till the end will come, and they find her stretched like a dead sheep with the frost on her, or the big spiders, maybe, and they putting their webs on her, in the butt of a ditch.

NORA

Angrily.

What way will yourself be that day, Daniel Burke? What way will you be that day and you lying down a long while in your grave? For it's bad you are living, and it's bad you'll be when you're dead. (*She looks at him a moment fiercely, then half turns away and speaks plaintively again.*) Yet, if it is itself,

Daniel Burke, who can help it at all, and let you be getting up into your bed, and not be taking your death with the wind blowing on you, and the rain with it, and you half in your skin.

DAN

It's proud and happy you'ld be if I was getting my death the day I was shut of yourself. (*Pointing to the door.*) Let you walk out through that door, I'm telling you, and let you not be passing this way if it's hungry you are, or wanting a bed.

TRAMP

Pointing to Micheal.

Maybe himself would take her.

NORA

What would he do with me now?

TRAMP

Give you the half of a dry bed, and good food in your mouth.

DAN

Is it a fool you think him, stranger, or is it a fool you were born yourself? Let her walk out of that door, and let you go along with

her, stranger — if it's raining itself — for it's too much talk you have surely.

TRAMP

Going over to Nora.

We'll be going now, lady of the house — the rain is falling, but the air is kind and maybe it'll be a grand morning by the grace of God.

NORA

What good is a grand morning when I'm destroyed surely, and I going out to get my death walking the roads?

TRAMP

You'll not be getting your death with myself, lady of the house, and I knowing all the ways a man can put food in his mouth. . . . We'll be going now, I'm telling you, and the time you'll be feeling the cold, and the frost, and the great rain, and the sun again, and the south wind blowing in the glens, you'll not be sitting up on a wet ditch, the way you're after sitting in the place, making yourself old with looking on each day, and it passing you by. You'll be saying one time, "It's a grand evening, by the grace of God," and another time, "It's a wild night, God help us, but it'll pass surely." You'll be saying —

DAN

Goes over to them crying out impatiently.

Go out of that door, I'm telling you, and do your blathering below in the glen.

Nora gathers a few things into her shawl.

TRAMP

At the door.

Come along with me now, lady of the house, and it's not my blather you'll be hearing only, but you'll be hearing the herons crying out over the black lakes, and you'll be hearing the grouse and the owls with them, and the larks and the big thrushes when the days are warm, and it's not from the like of them you'll be hearing a talk of getting old like Peggy Cavanagh, and losing the hair off you, and the light of your eyes, but it's fine songs you'll be hearing when the sun goes up, and there'll be no old fellow wheezing, the like of a sick sheep, close to your ear.

NORA

I'm thinking it's myself will be wheezing that time with lying down under the Heavens when the night is cold; but you've a fine bit

of talk, stranger, and it's with yourself I'll go. (*She goes towards the door, then turns to Dan.*) You think it's a grand thing you're after doing with your letting on to be dead, but what is it at all? What way would a woman live in a lonesome place the like of this place, and she not making a talk with the men passing? And what way will yourself live from this day, with none to care for you? What is it you'll have now but a black life, Daniel Burke, and it's not long I'm telling you, till you'll be lying again under that sheet, and you dead surely.

She goes out with the Tramp. Micheal is slinking after them, but Dan stops him.

DAN

Sit down now and take a little taste of the stuff, Micheal Dara. There's a great drouth on me, and the night is young.

MICHEAL

Coming back to the table.

And it's very dry I am, surely, with the fear of death you put on me, and I after driving mountain ewes since the turn of the day.

DAN

Throwing away his stick.

I was thinking to strike you, Micheal Dara, but you're a quiet man, God help you, and I don't mind you at all.

He pours out two glasses of whisky, and gives one to Micheal.

DAN

Your good health, Micheal Dara.

MICHEAL

God reward you, Daniel Burke, and may you have a long life, and a quiet life, and good health with it.

They drink.

CURTAIN.

Riders to the Sea

INTRODUCTION

It must have been on Synge's second visit to the Aran Islands that he had the experience out of which was wrought what many believe to be his greatest play. The scene of "Riders to the Sea" is laid in a cottage on Inishmaan, the middle and most interesting island of the Aran group. While Synge was on Inishmaan, the story came to him of a man whose body had been washed up on the far away coast of Donegal, and who, by reason of certain peculiarities of dress, was suspected to be from the island. In due course, he was recognised as a native of Inishmaan, in exactly the manner described in the play, and perhaps one of the most poignantly vivid passages in Synge's book on "The Aran Islands" relates the incident of his burial.

The other element in the story which Synge introduces into the play is equally true. Many tales of "second sight" are to be heard among Celtic races. In fact, they are so common as

to arouse little or no wonder in the minds of the people. It is just such a tale, which there seems no valid reason for doubting, that Synge heard, and that gave the title, "Riders to the Sea", to his play.

It is the dramatist's high distinction that he has simply taken the materials which lay ready to his hand, and by the power of sympathy woven them, with little modification, into a tragedy which, for dramatic irony and noble pity, has no equal among its contemporaries.

Great tragedy, it is frequently claimed with some show of justice, has perforce departed with the advance of modern life and its complicated tangle of interests and creature comforts. A highly developed civilisation, with its attendant specialisation of culture, tends ever to lose sight of those elemental forces, those primal emotions, naked to wind and sky, which are the stuff from which great drama is wrought by the artist, but which, as it would seem, are rapidly departing from us.

It is only in the far places, where solitary communion may be had with the elements, that this dynamic life is still to be found continu-

ously, and it is accordingly thither that the dramatist, who would deal with spiritual life disengaged from the environment of an intellectual maze, must go for that experience which will beget in him inspiration for his art.

The Aran Islands from which Synge gained his inspiration are rapidly losing that sense of isolation and self-dependence, which has hitherto been their rare distinction, and which furnished the motivation for Synge's masterpiece. Whether or not Synge finds a successor, it is none the less true that in English dramatic literature "Riders to the Sea" has an historic value which it would be difficult to overestimate in its accomplishment and its possibilities. A writer in The Manchester Guardian shortly after Synge's death phrased it rightly when he wrote that it is "the tragic masterpiece of our language in our time; wherever it has been played in Europe from Galway to Prague, it has made the word tragedy mean something more profoundly stirring and cleansing to the spirit than it did."

The secret of the play's power is its capacity for standing afar off, and mingling, if we may

say so, sympathy with relentlessness. There is a wonderful beauty of speech in the words of every character, wherein the latent power of suggestion is almost unlimited. "In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old." In the quavering rhythm of these words, there is poignantly present that quality of strangeness and remoteness in beauty which, as we are coming to realise, is the touchstone of Celtic literary art. However, the very asceticism of the play has begotten a corresponding power which lifts Synge's work far out of the current of the Irish literary revival, and sets it high in a timeless atmosphere of universal action.

Its characters live — and die. It is their virtue in life to be lonely, and none but the lonely man in tragedy may be great. He dies, and then it is the virtue in life of the women — mothers and wives and sisters — to be great in their loneliness, great as Maurya, the stricken mother, is great in her final word.

"Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied."

The pity and the terror of it all have brought a great peace, the peace that passeth understanding, and it is because the play holds this timeless peace after the storm which has bowed down every character, that "Riders to the Sea" may rightly take its place as the greatest modern tragedy in the English tongue.

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN.

February 23, 1911.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

A Play in One Act

First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, February 25th, 1904.

PERSONS

Maurya (*an old woman*) .	Honor Lavelle
Bartley (*her son*) . . .	W. G. Fay
Cathleen (*her daughter*)	Sarah Allgood
Nora (*a younger daughter*)	Emma Vernon
Men and Women	

RIDERS TO THE SEA

A Play in One Act

First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, February 25th, 1904.

Scene.— *An Island off the West of Ireland.*

(*Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc. Cathleen, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. Nora, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.*)

NORA

In a low voice.

Where is she?

CATHLEEN

She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

Nora comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl.

CATHLEEN

Spinning the wheel rapidly.

What is it you have?

NORA

The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

Cathleen stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen.

NORA

We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN

How would they be Michael's, Nora. How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA

The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his,

let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, " with crying and lamenting."

The door which Nora half closed is blown open by a gust of wind.

CATHLEEN

Looking out anxiously.

Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA

" I won't stop him," says he, " but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, " with no son living."

CATHLEEN

Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA

Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind.

She goes over to the table with the bundle.

Shall I open it now?

CATHLEEN

Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done.

Coming to the table.

It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA

Goes to the inner door and listens.

She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN

Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; Cathleen goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. Maurya comes from the inner room.

MAURYA

Looking up at Cathleen and speaking querulously.

Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN

There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space

Throwing down the turf

and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

Nora picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven.

MAURYA

Sitting down on a stool at the fire.

He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA

He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA

Where is he itself?

NORA

He went down to see would there be another

boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN

I hear some one passing the big stones.

NORA

Looking out.

He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY

Comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly.

Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN

Coming down.

Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA

Giving him a rope.

Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA

You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley,

hanging by the boards (*Bartley takes the rope*). It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up tomorrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

BARTLEY

Beginning to work with the rope.

I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

MAURYA

It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

She looks round at the boards.

BARTLEY

How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA

If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

BARTLEY

Working at the halter, to Cathleen.

Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA

How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY

To Cathleen.

If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

MAURYA

It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're

drownd'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

Bartley lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel.

BARTLEY

To Nora.

Is she coming to the pier?

NORA

Looking out.

She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY

Getting his purse and tobacco.

I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

MAURYA

Turning round to the fire, and puting her shawl over her head.

Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN

It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY

Taking the halter.

I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony 'll run behind me. . . The blessing of God on you.

He goes out.

MAURYA

Crying out as he is in the door.

He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN

Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

Maurya takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round.

NORA

Turning towards her.

You're taking away the turf from the cake.

CATHLEEN

Crying out.

The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.

She comes over to the fire.

NORA

And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN

Turning the cake out of the oven.

It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever.

Maurya sways herself on her stool.

CATHLEEN

Cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to Maurya.

Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see

him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA

Taking the bread.

Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN

If you go now quickly.

MAURYA

Standing up unsteadily.

It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN

Looking at her anxiously.

Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA

What stick?

CATHLEEN

The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

MAURYA

Taking a stick Nora gives her.

In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and

children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

She goes out slowly.
Nora goes over to the ladder.

CATHLEEN

Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

NORA

Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN

Looking out.

She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

NORA

Getting the bundle from the loft.

The young priest said he'd be passing to-morrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

CATHLEEN

Taking the bundle.
Did he say what way they were found?

NORA

Coming down.

"There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN

Trying to open the bundle.

Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA

Giving her a knife.

I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN

Cutting the string.

It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago — the man sold us that knife — and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA

And what time would a man take, and he floating?

Cathleen opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a stocking. They look at them eagerly.

CATHLEEN

In a low voice.

The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA

I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other (*she looks through some clothes hanging in the corner.*) It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN

I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it (*pointing to the corner*). There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

Nora brings it to her and they compare the flannel.

CATHLEEN

It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA

Who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out.

It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN

Taking the stocking.

It's a plain stocking.

NORA

It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN

Counts the stitches.

It's that number is in it (*crying out.*) Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA

Swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes.

And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is

nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN

After an instant.

Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA

Looking out.

She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN

Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA

Helping Cathleen to close the bundle.

We'll put them here in the corner.

They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. Cathleen goes back to the spinning-wheel.

NORA

Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN

Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

Nora sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. Maurya comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and Nora points to the bundle of bread.

CATHLEEN

After spinning for a moment.

You didn't give him his bit of bread?

Maurya begins to keen softly, without turning round.

CATHLEEN

Did you see him riding down?

Maurya goes on keening.

CATHLEEN

A little impatiently.

God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's

done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you.

MAURYA

With a weak voice.

My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN

As before.

Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA

I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN

Leaves her wheel and looks out.

God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

MAURYA

Starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice.

The gray pony behind him.

CATHLEEN

Coming to the fire.

What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA

Speaking very slowly.

I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN AND NORA

Uah.

They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.

NORA

Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA

I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him (*she puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes.*) The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN

What is it you seen.

MAURYA

I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN

Speaking softly.

You did not, mother; It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

MAURYA

A little defiantly.

I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it — with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN

Begins to keen.

It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA

Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA

In a low voice, but clearly.

It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house — six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world — and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.

NORA

In a whisper.

Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

CATHLEEN

In a whisper.

There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA

Continues without hearing anything.

There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it — it was a dry day, Nora — and leaving a track to the door.

She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.

MAURYA

Half in a dream, to Cathleen.

Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN

Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA

There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN

It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

She reaches out and hands Maurya the clothes that belonged to Michael. Maurya stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. Nora looks out.

NORA

They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN

In a whisper to the women who have come in.

Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN

It is surely, God rest his soul.

Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.

CATHLEEN

To the women, as they are doing so.

What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN

The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

Maurya has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. Cathleen and Nora kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.

MAURYA

Raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her.

They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. (*To Nora*). Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser.

Nora gives it to her.

MAURYA

Drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him.

It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'ld be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's

time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.

CATHLEEN

To an old man.

Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN

Looking at the boards.

Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN

There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN

It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN

It's getting old she is, and broken.

Maurya stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of Michael's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.

NORA

In a whisper to Cathleen.

She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

CATHLEEN

Slowly and clearly.

An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA

Puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet.

They're all together this time, and the end

is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn (*bending her head*); and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away.

MAURYA

Continuing.

Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS

SCENE

Some lonely mountainous district in the east of Ireland one or more centuries ago.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS was first produced in the Abbey Theatre in February, 1905, by the Irish National Theatre Society, under the direction of W. G. Fay, and with the following cast.

Martin Doul	W. G. FAY
Mary Doul	EMMA VERNON
Timmy	GEORGE ROBERTS
Molly Byrne	SARA ALLGOOD
Bride	MAIRE NIC SHIUBHLAIGH
Mat Simon	P. MAC SHIUBHLAIGH
The Saint	F. J. FAY

OTHER GIRLS AND MEN

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MARTIN DOUL, *weather-beaten, blind beggar*

MARY DOUL, *his Wife, weather-beaten, ugly woman, blind also, nearly fifty*

TIMMY, *a middle-aged, almost elderly, but vigorous smith*

MOLLY BYRNE, *fine-looking girl with fair hair*

BRIDE, *another handsome girl*

MAT SIMON

THE SAINT, *a wandering Friar*

OTHER GIRLS AND MEN

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS

ACT I

Roadside with big stones, etc., on the right; low loose wall at back with gap near centre; at left, ruined doorway of church with bushes beside it. Martin Doul and Mary Doul grope in on left and pass over to stones on right, where they sit.

MARY DOUL. What place are we now, Martin Doul?

MARTIN DOUL. Passing the gap.

MARY DOUL — *raising her head.* — The length of that! Well, the sun's getting warm this day if it's late autumn itself.

MARTIN DOUL — *putting out his hands in sun.* — What way wouldn't it be warm and it getting high up in the south? You were that length plaiting your yellow hair you have the morning lost on us, and the people are after passing to the fair of Clash.

MARY DOUL. It isn't going to the fair, the time they do be driving their cattle and they with a litter of pigs maybe squealing in their carts, they'd give us a thing at all. (*She*

sits down.) It's well you know that, but you must be talking.

MARTIN DOUL — *sitting down beside her and beginning to shred rushes she gives him.*— If I didn't talk I'd be destroyed in a short while listening to the clack you do be making, for you've a queer cracked voice, the Lord have mercy on you, if it's fine to look on you are itself.

MARY DOUL. Who wouldn't have a cracked voice sitting out all the year in the rain falling? It's a bad life for the voice, Martin Doul, though I've heard tell there isn't anything like the wet south wind does be blowing upon us for keeping a white beautiful skin — the like of my skin — on your neck and on your brows, and there isn't anything at all like a fine skin for putting splendour on a woman.

MARTIN DOUL — *teasingly, but with good humour.*— I do be thinking odd times we don't know rightly what way you have your splendour, or asking myself, maybe, if you have it at all, for the time I was a young lad, and had fine sight, it was the ones with sweet voices were the best in face.

MARY DOUL. Let you not be making the like of that talk when you've heard

Timmy the smith, and Mat Simon, and Patch Ruadh, and a power besides saying fine things of my face, and you know rightly it was "the beautiful dark woman" they did call me in Ballinatone.

MARTIN DOUL — *as before.*— If it was itself I heard Molly Byrne saying at the fall of night it was little more than a fright you were.

MARY DOUL — *sharply.*— She was jealous, God forgive her, because Timmy the smith was after praising my hair ——

MARTIN DOUL — *with mock irony.*— Jealous!

MARY DOUL. Ay, jealous, Martin Doul; and if she wasn't itself, the young and silly do be always making game of them that's dark, and they'd think it a fine thing if they had us deceived, the way we wouldn't know we were so fine-looking at all.

[*She puts her hand to her face with a complacent gesture.*

MARTIN DOUL — *a little plaintively.*— I do be thinking in the long nights it'd be a grand thing if we could see ourselves for one hour, or a minute itself, the way we'd know surely we were the finest man and the finest woman of the seven counties of the east —

(*bitterly*) and then the seeing rabble below might be destroying their souls telling bad lies, and we'd never heed a thing they'd say.

MARY DOUL. If you weren't a big fool you wouldn't heed them this hour, Martin Doul, for they're a bad lot those that have their sight, and they do have great joy, the time they do be seeing a grand thing, to let on they don't see it at all, and to be telling fool's lies, the like of what Molly Byrne was telling to yourself.

MARTIN DOUL. If it's lies she does be telling she's a sweet, beautiful voice you'd never tire to be hearing, if it was only the pig she'd be calling, or crying out in the long grass, maybe, after her hens. (*Speaking pensively.*) It should be a fine, soft, rounded woman, I'm thinking, would have a voice the like of that.

MARY DOUL — *sharply again, scandalized.* — Let you not be minding if it's flat or rounded she is; for she's a flighty, foolish woman, you'll hear when you're off a long way, and she making a great noise and laughing at the well.

MARTIN DOUL. Isn't laughing a nice thing the time a woman's young?

MARY DOUL — *bitterly.* — A nice thing

is it? A nice thing to hear a woman making a loud braying laugh the like of that? Ah, she's a great one for drawing the men, and you'll hear Timmy himself, the time he does be sitting in his forge, getting mighty fussy if she'll come walking from Grianan, the way you'll hear his breath going, and he wringing his hands.

MARTIN DOUL — *slightly piqued.* — I've heard him say a power of times it's nothing at all she is when you see her at the side of you, and yet I never heard any man's breath getting uneasy the time he'd be looking on yourself.

MARY DOUL. I'm not the like of the girls do be running round on the roads, swinging their legs, and they with their necks out looking on the men. . . . Ah, there's a power of villainy walking the world, Martin Doul, among them that do be gadding around with their gaping eyes, and their sweet words, and they with no sense in them at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *sadly.*— It's the truth, maybe, and yet I'm told it's a grand thing to see a young girl walking the road.

MARY DOUL. You'd be as bad as the rest of them if you had your sight, and I did well, surely, not to marry a seeing man —

it's scores would have had me and welcome — for the seeing is a queer lot, and you'd never know the thing they'd do.

[*A moment's pause.*

MARTIN DOUL — *listening.* — There's some one coming on the road.

MARY DOUL. Let you put the pith away out of their sight, or they'll be picking it out with the spying eyes they have, and saying it's rich we are, and not sparing us a thing at all.

[*They bundle away the rushes. Timmy the smith comes in on left.*

MARTIN DOUL — *with a begging voice.* — Leave a bit of silver for blind Martin, your honour. Leave a bit of silver, or a penny copper itself, and we'll be praying the Lord to bless you and you going the way.

TIMMY — *stopping before them.* — And you letting on a while back you knew my step!

[*He sits down.*

MARTIN — *with his natural voice.* — I know it when Molly Byrne's walking in front, or when she's two perches, maybe, lagging behind; but it's few times I've heard you walking up the like of that, as if you'd met a thing wasn't right and you coming on the road.

TIMMY — *hot and breathless, wiping his face.* — You've good ears, God bless you, if you're a liar itself; for I'm after walking up in great haste from hearing wonders in the fair.

MARTIN DOUL — *rather contemptuously.* — You're always hearing queer wonderful things, and the lot of them nothing at all; but I'm thinking, this time, it's a strange thing surely you'd be walking up before the turn of day, and not waiting below to look on them lepping, or dancing, or playing shows on the green of Clash.

TIMMY — *huffed.* — I was coming to tell you it's in this place there'd be a bigger wonder done in a short while (*Martin Doul stops working*) than was ever done on the green of Clash, or the width of Leinster itself; but you're thinking, maybe, you're too cute a little fellow to be minding me at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *amused, but incredulous.* — There'll be wonders in this place, is it?

TIMMY. Here at the crossing of the roads.

MARTIN DOUL. I never heard tell of anything to happen in this place since the night they killed the old fellow going home with his gold, the Lord have mercy on him,

ınd threw down his corpse into the bog. Let them not be doing the like of that this night, for it's ourselves have a right to the crossing roads, and we don't want any of your bad tricks, or your wonders either, for it's wonder enough we are ourselves.

TIMMY. If I'd a mind I'd be telling you of a real wonder this day, and the way you'll be having a great joy, maybe, you're not thinking on at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *interested.*— Are they putting up a still behind in the rocks? It'd be a grand thing if I'd sup handy the way I wouldn't be destroying myself groping up across the bogs in the rain falling.

TIMMY — *still moodily.*— It's not a still they're bringing, or the like of it either.

MARY DOUL — *persuasively, to Timmy.* — Maybe they're hanging a thief, above at the bit of a tree. I'm told it's a great sight to see a man hanging by his neck; but what joy would that be to ourselves, and we not seeing it at all?

TIMMY — *more pleasantly.*— They're hanging no one this day, Mary Doul, and yet, with the help of God, you'll see a power hanged before you die.

MARY DOUL. Well you've queer hum-

bugging talk. . . . What way would I see a power hanged, and I a dark woman since the seventh year of my age?

TIMMY. Did ever you hear tell of a place across a bit of the sea, where there is an island, and the grave of the four beautiful saints?

MARY DOUL. I've heard people have walked round from the west and they speaking of that.

TIMMY — *impressively.*— There's a green ferny well, I'm told, behind of that place, and if you put a drop of the water out of it on the eyes of a blind man, you'll make him see as well as any person is walking the world.

MARTIN DOUL — *with excitement.* — Is that the truth, Timmy? I'm thinking you're telling a lie.

TIMMY — *gruffly.* — That's the truth, Martin Doul, and you may believe it now, for you're after believing a power of things weren't as likely at all.

MARY DOUL. Maybe we could send us a young lad to bring us the water. I could wash a naggin bottle in the morning, and I'm thinking Patch Ruadh would go for it, if we gave him a good drink, and the bit of money we have hid in the thatch.

TIMMY. It'd be no good to be sending a sinful man the like of ourselves, for I'm told the holiness of the water does be getting soiled with the villainy of your heart, the time you'd be carrying it, and you looking round on the girls, maybe, or drinking a small sup at a still.

MARTIN DOUL — *with disappointment.* —It'd be a long terrible way to be walking ourselves, and I'm thinking that's a wonder will bring small joy to us at all.

TIMMY — *turning on him impatiently.*— What is it you want with your walking? It's as deaf as blind you're growing if you're not after hearing me say it's in this place the wonder would be done.

MARTIN DOUL — *with a flash of anger.* — If it is can't you open the big slobbering mouth you have and say what way it'll be done, and not be making blather till the fall of night.

TIMMY — *jumping up.*— I'll be going on now (*Mary Doul rises*), and not wasting time talking civil talk with the like of you.

MARY DOUL — *standing up, disguising her impatience.*— Let you come here to me, Timmy, and not be minding him at all. (*Timmy stops, and she gropes up to him and takes him by the coat*). You're not huffy

with myself, and let you tell me the whole story and don't be fooling me more. . . . Is it yourself has brought us the water?

TIMMY. It is not, surely.

MARY DOUL. Then tell us your wonder, Timmy. . . . What person'll bring it at all?

TIMMY — *relenting.*— It's a fine holy man will bring it, a saint of the Almighty God.

MARY DOUL — *overawed.*— A saint is it?

TIMMY. Ay, a fine saint, who's going round through the churches of Ireland, with a long cloak on him, and naked feet, for he's brought a sup of the water slung at his side, and, with the like of him, any little drop is enough to cure the dying, or to make the blind see as clear as the gray hawks do be high up, on a still day, sailing the sky.

MARTIN DOUL — *feeling for his stick.* —What place is he, Timmy? I'll be walking to him now.

TIMMY. Let you stay quiet, Martin. He's straying around saying prayers at the churches and high crosses, between this place and the hills, and he with a great crowd going behind — for it's fine prayers he does be saying, and fasting with it, till he's as thin as one of the empty rushes you have there on

your knee; then he'll be coming after to this place to cure the two of you — we're after telling him the way you are — and to say his prayers in the church.

MARTIN DOUL — *turning suddenly to Mary Doul.* — And we'll be seeing ourselves this day. Oh, glory be to God, is it true surely?

MARY DOUL — *very pleased, to Timmy.* — Maybe I'd have time to walk down and get the big shawl I have below, for I do look my best, I've heard them say, when I'm dressed up with that thing on my head.

TIMMY. You'd have time surely ——

MARTIN DOUL — *listening.* — Whisht now. . . I hear people again coming by the stream.

TIMMY — *looking out left, puzzled.* — It's the young girls I left walking after the Saint. . . . They're coming now (*goes up to entrance*) carrying things in their hands, and they walking as easy as you'd see a child walk who'd have a dozen eggs hid in her bib.

MARTIN DOUL — *listening.* — That's Molly Byrne, I'm thinking.

[*Molly Byrne and Bride come on left and cross to Martin Doul, carrying water-can, Saint's bell, and cloak.*

MOLLY — *volubly.*— God bless you, Martin. I've holy water here, from the grave of the four saints of the west, will have you cured in a short while and seeing like ourselves ——

TIMMY — *crosses to Molly, interrupting her.*— He's heard that. God help you. But where at all is the Saint, and what way is he after trusting the holy water with the likes of you?

MOLLY BYRNE. He was afeard to go a far way with the clouds is coming beyond, so he's gone up now through the thick woods to say a prayer at the crosses of Grianan, and he's coming on this road to the church.

TIMMY — *still astonished.*— And he's after leaving the holy water with the two of you? It's a wonder, surely.

[*Comes down left a little.*

MOLLY BYRNE. The lads told him no person could carry them things through the briars, and steep, slippy-feeling rocks he'll be climbing above, so he looked round then, and gave the water, and his big cloak, and his bell to the two of us, for young girls, says he, are the cleanest holy people you'd see walking the world.

[*Mary Doul goes near seat.*

MARY DOUL — *sits down, laughing to herself.*— Well, the Saint's a simple fellow, and it's no lie.

MARTIN DOUL — *leaning forward, holding out his hands.*— Let you give me the water in my hand, Molly Byrne, the way I'll know you have it surely.

MOLLY BYRNE — *giving it to him.*— Wonders is queer things, and maybe it'd cure you, and you holding it alone.

MARTIN DOUL — *looking round.*— It does not, Molly. I'm not seeing at all. (*He shakes the can.*) There's a small sup only. Well, isn't it a great wonder the little trifling thing would bring seeing to the blind, and be showing us the big women and the young girls, and all the fine things is walking the world.

[*He feels for Mary Doul and gives her the can.*

MARY DOUL — *shaking it.*— Well, glory be to God ——

MARTIN DOUL — *pointing to Bride.*— And what is it herself has, making sounds in her hand?

BRIDE — *crossing to Martin Doul.*— It's the Saint's bell; you'll hear him ringing out

the time he'll be going up some place, to be saying his prayers.

[*Martin Doul holds out his hand; she gives it to him.*

MARTIN DOUL — *ringing it.*— It's a sweet, beautiful sound.

MARY DOUL. You'd know, I'm thinking, by the little silvery voice of it, a fasting holy man was after carrying it a great way at his side.

[*Bride crosses a little right behind Martin Doul.*

MOLLY BYRNE — *unfolding Saint's cloak.*— Let you stand up now, Martin Doul, till I put his big cloak on you. (*Martin Doul rises, comes forward, centre a little.*) The way we'd see how you'd look, and you a saint of the Almighty God.

MARTIN DOUL — *standing up, a little diffidently.*— I've heard the priests a power of times making great talk and praises of the beauty of the saints.

[*Molly Byrne slips cloak round him.*

TIMMY — *uneasily.*— You'd have a right to be leaving him alone, Molly. What would the Saint say if he seen you making game with his cloak?

MOLLY BYRNE — *recklessly.*— How would he see us, and he saying prayers in the wood? (*She turns Martin Doul round.*) Isn't that a fine, holy-looking saint, Timmy the smith? (*Laughing foolishly.*) There's a grand, handsome fellow, Mary Doul; and if you seen him now you'd be as proud, I'm thinking, as the archangels below, fell out with the Almighty God.

MARY DOUL — *with quiet confidence going to Martin Doul and feeling his cloak.*— It's proud we'll be this day, surely.

[*Martin Doul is still ringing.*

MOLLY BYRNE — *to Martin Doul.*— Would you think well to be all your life walking round the like of that, Martin Doul, and you bell-ringing with the saints of God?

MARY DOUL — *turning on her, fiercely.* — How would he be bell-ringing with the saints of God and he wedded with myself?

MARTIN DOUL. It's the truth she's saying, and if bell-ringing is a fine life, yet I'm thinking, maybe, it's better I am wedded with the beautiful dark woman of Ballinatone.

MOLLY BYRNE — *scornfully.*— You're thinking that, God help you; but it's little you know of her at all.

MARTIN DOUL. It's little surely, and

I'm destroyed this day waiting to look upon her face.

TIMMY — *awkwardly.*— It's well you know the way she is; for the like of you do have great knowledge in the feeling of your hands.

MARTIN DOUL — *still feeling the cloak.* — We do, maybe. Yet it's little I know of faces, or of fine beautiful cloaks, for it's few cloaks I've had my hand to, and few faces (*plaintively*); for the young girls is mighty shy, Timmy the smith and it isn't much they heed me, though they do be saying I'm a handsome man.

MARY DOUL — *mockingly, with good humour.*— Isn't it a queer thing the voice he puts on him, when you hear him talking of the skinny-looking girls, and he married with a woman he's heard called the wonder of the western world?

TIMMY — *pityingly.*— The two of you will see a great wonder this day, and it's no lie.

MARTIN DOUL. I've heard tell her yellow hair, and her white skin, and her big eyes are a wonder, surely ——

BRIDE — *who has looked out left.*— Here's the Saint coming from the salvage of

the wood. . . . Strip the cloak from him, Molly, or he'll be seeing it now.

MOLLY BYRNE — *hastily to Bride.*— Take the bell and put yourself by the stones. (*To Martin Doul.*) Will you hold your head up till I loosen the cloak? (*She pulls off the cloak and throws it over her arm. Then she pushes Martin Doul over and stands him beside Mary Doul.*) Stand there now, quiet, and let you not be saying a word.

[*She and Bride stand a little on their left, demurely, with bell, etc., in their hands.*

MARTIN DOUL — *nervously arranging his clothes.*— Will he mind the way we are, and not tidied or washed cleanly at all?

MOLLY BYRNE. He'll not see what way you are. . . . He'd walk by the finest woman in Ireland, I'm thinking, and not trouble to raise his two eyes to look upon her face. . . . Whisht!

[*The Saint comes left, with crowd.*

SAINT. Are these the two poor people?

TIMMY — *officiously.*— They are, holy father; they do be always sitting here at the crossing of the roads, asking a bit of copper from them that do pass, or stripping rushes for lights, and they not mournful at all, but

talking out straight with a full voice, and making game with them that likes it.

SAINT — *to Martin Doul and Mary Doul.* — It's a hard life you've had not seeing sun or moon, or the holy priests itself praying to the Lord, but it's the like of you who are brave in a bad time will make a fine use of the gift of sight the Almighty God will bring to you today. (*He takes his cloak and puts it about him.*) It's on a bare starving rock that there's the grave of the four beauties of God, the way it's little wonder, I'm thinking, if it's with bare starving people the water should be used. (*He takes the water and bell and slings them round his shoulders.*) So it's to the like of yourselves I do be going, who are wrinkled and poor, a thing rich men would hardly look at at all, but would throw a coin to or a crust of bread.

MARTIN DOUL — *moving uneasily.*— When they look on herself, who is a fine woman, ——

TIMMY — *shaking him.*— Whisht now, and be listening to the Saint.

SAINT — *looks at them a moment, continues.*— If it's raggy and dirty you are itself, I'm saying, the Almighty God isn't at all like the rich men of Ireland; and, with the power of the water I'm after bringing in a little

curagh into Cashla Bay, He'll have pity on you, and put sight into your eyes.

MARTIN DOUL — *taking off his hat.* — I'm ready now, holy father ——

SAINT — *taking him by the hand.* — I'll cure you first, and then I'll come for your wife. We'll go up now into the church, for I must say a prayer to the Lord. (*To Mary Doul, as he moves off.*) And let you be making your mind still and saying praises in your heart, for it's a great wonderful thing when the power of the Lord of the world is brought down upon your like.

PEOPLE — *pressing after him.* — Come now till we watch.

BRIDE. Come, Timmy.

SAINT — *waving them back.* — Stay back where you are, for I'm not wanting a big crowd making whispers in the church. Stay back there, I'm saying, and you'd do well to be thinking on the way sin has brought blindness to the world, and to be saying a prayer for your own sakes against false prophets and heathens, and the words of women and smiths, and all knowledge that would soil the soul or the body of a man.

[*People shrink back. He goes into church. Mary Doul gropes half-way*

towards the door and kneels near path. People form a group at right.

TIMMY. Isn't it a fine, beautiful voice he has, and he a fine, brave man if it wasn't for the fasting?

BRIDE. Did you watch him moving his hands?

MOLLY BYRNE. It'd be a fine thing if some one in this place could pray the like of him, for I'm thinking the water from our own blessed well would do rightly if a man knew the way to be saying prayers, and then there'd be no call to be bringing water from that wild place, where, I'm told, there are no decent houses, or fine-looking people at all.

BRIDE — *who is looking in at door from right.*— Look at the great trembling Martin has shaking him, and he on his knees.

TIMMY — *anxiously.*— God help him. . . What will he be doing when he sees his wife this day? I'm thinking it was bad work we did when we let on she was fine-looking, and not a wrinkled, wizened hag the way she is.

MAT SIMON. Why would he be vexed, and we after giving him great joy and pride, the time he was dark?

MOLLY BYRNE — *sitting down in Mary Doul's seat and tidying her hair.*— If it's

vexed he is itself, he'll have other things now to think on as well as his wife; and what does any man care for a wife, when it's two weeks or three, he is looking on her face?

MAT SIMON. That's the truth now, Molly, and it's more joy dark Martin got from the lies we told of that hag is kneeling by the path than your own man will get from you, day or night, and he living at your side.

MOLLY BYRNE — *defiantly.*— Let you not be talking, Mat Simon, for it's not yourself will be my man, though you'd be crowing and singing fine songs if you'd that hope in you at all.

TIMMY — *shocked, to Molly Byrne.*— Let you not be raising your voice when the Saint's above at his prayers.

BRIDE — *crying out.*— Whisht. . . . Whisht. . . . I'm thinking he's cured.

MARTIN DOUL — *crying out in the church.*— Oh, glory be to God. . . .

SAINT — *solemnly.*— Laus Patri sit et
Filio cum Spiritu Paraclito
Qui Suae dono gratiae misertus est Hiberniae. . . .

MARTIN DOUL—*ecstatically.*—Oh, glory be to God, I see now surely. . . . I see the walls of the church, and the green bits of

ferns in them, and yourself, holy father, and the great width of the sky.

[*He runs out half-foolish with joy, and comes past Mary Doul as she scrambles to her fect, drawing a little away from her as he goes by.*

TIMMY — *to the others.* — He doesn't know her at all.

[*The Saint comes out behind Martin Doul, and leads Mary Doul into the church. Martin Doul comes on to the People. The men are between him and the Girls; he verifies his position with his stick.*

MARTIN DOUL — *crying out joyfully.* — That's Timmy, I know Timmy by the black of his head. . . . That's Mat Simon, I know Mat by the length of his legs. . . . That should be Patch Ruadh, with the gamey eyes in him, and the fiery hair. (*He sees Molly Byrne on Mary Doul's seat, and his voice changes completely.*) Oh, it was no lie they told me, Mary Doul. Oh, glory to God and the seven saints I didn't die and not see you at all. The blessing of God on the water, and the feet carried it round through the land. The blessing of God on this day, and them that brought me the Saint, for it's grand hair

you have (*she lowers her head a little confused*), and soft skin, and eyes would make the saints, if they were dark awhile and seeing again, fall down out of the sky. (*He goes nearer to her.*) Hold up your head, Mary, the way I'll see it's richer I am than the great kings of the east. Hold up your head, I'm saying, for it's soon you'll be seeing me, and I not a bad one at all.

[*He touches her and she starts up.*

MOLLY BYRNE. Let you keep away from me, and not be soiling my chin.

[*People laugh heartily.*

MARTIN DOUL — *bewildered.* — It's Molly's voice you have.

MOLLY BYRNE. Why wouldn't I have my own voice? Do you think I'm a ghost?

MARTIN DOUL. Which of you all is herself? (*He goes up to Bride.*) Is it you is Mary Doul? I'm thinking you're more the like of what they said (*peering at her.*) For you've yellow hair, and white skin, and it's the smell of my own turf is rising from your shawl.

[*He catches her shawl.*

BRIDE — *pulling away her shawl.* — I'm not your wife, and let you get out of my way.

[*The People laugh again.*

MARTIN DOUL — *with misgiving, to another Girl.*— Is it yourself it is? You're not so fine-looking, but I'm thinking you'd do, with the grand nose you have, and your nice hands and your feet.

GIRL — *scornfully.*— I never seen any person that took me for blind, and a seeing woman, I'm thinking, would never wed the like of you.

[*She turns away, and the People laugh once more, drawing back a little and leaving him on their left.*

PEOPLE — *jeeringly.*— Try again, Martin, try again, and you'll be finding her yet.

MARTIN DOUL — *passionately.*—Where is it you have her hidden away? Isn't it a black shame for a drove of pitiful beasts the like of you to be making game of me, and putting a fool's head on me the grand day of my life? Ah, you're thinking you're a fine lot, with your giggling, weeping eyes, a fine lot to be making game of myself and the woman I've heard called the great wonder of the west.

[*During this speech, which he gives with his back towards the church, Mary Doul has come out with her sight*

cured, and come down towards the right with a silly simpering smile, till she is a little behind Martin Doul.

MARY DOUL — *when he pauses.*—Which of you is Martin Doul?

MARTIN DOUL — *wheeling round.*— It's her voice surely.

[*They stare at each other blankly.*

MOLLY BYRNE — *to Martin Doul.*— Go up now and take her under the chin and be speaking the way you spoke to myself.

MARTIN DOUL — *in a low voice, with intensity.*— If I speak now, I'll speak hard to the two of you ——

MOLLY BYRNE — *to Mary Doul.*— You're not saying a word, Mary. What is it you think of himself, with the fat legs on him, and the little neck like a ram?

MARY DOUL. I'm thinking it's a poor thing when the Lord God gives you sight and puts the like of that man in your way.

MARTIN DOUL. It's on your two knees you should be thanking the Lord God you're not looking on yourself, for if it was yourself you seen you'd be running round in a short while like the old screeching madwoman is running round in the glen.

MARY DOUL — *beginning to realize her-*

self. — If I'm not so fine as some of them said, I have my hair, and big eyes, and my white skin ——

MARTIN DOUL — *breaking out into a passionate cry.* — Your hair, and your big eyes, is it? . . . I'm telling you there isn't a wisp on any gray mare on the ridge of the world isn't finer than the dirty twist on your head. There isn't two eyes in any starving sow isn't finer than the eyes you were calling blue like the sea.

MARY DOUL — *interrupting him.* — It's the devil cured you this day with your talking of sows; it's the devil cured you this day, I'm saying, and drove you crazy with lies.

MARTIN DOUL. Isn't it yourself is after playing lies on me, ten years, in the day and in the night; but what is that to you now the Lord God has given eyes to me, the way I see you an old wizendy hag, was never fit to rear a child to me itself.

MARY DOUL. I wouldn't rear a crumpled whelp the like of you. It's many a woman is married with finer than yourself should be praising God if she's no child, and isn't loading the earth with things would make the heavens lonesome above, and they scaring the larks, and the crows, and the angels passing in the sky.

MARTIN DOUL. Go on now to be seeking a lonesome place where the earth can hide you away; go on now, I'm saying, or you'll be having men and women with their knees bled, and they screaming to God for a holy water would darken their sight, for there's no man but would liefer be blind a hundred years, or a thousand itself, than to be looking on your like.

MARY DOUL — *raising her stick.*—Maybe if I hit you a strong blow you'd be blind again, and having what you want ——

[*The Saint is seen in the church door with his head bent in prayer.*

MARTIN DOUL — *raising his stick and driving Mary Doul back towards left.*— Let you keep off from me now if you wouldn't have me strike out the little handful of brains you have about on the road.

[*He is going to strike her, but Timmy catches him by the arm.*

TIMMY. Have you no shame to be making a great row, and the Saint above saying his prayers?

MARTIN DOUL. What is it I care for the like of him? (*Struggling to free himself*). Let me hit her one good one, for the

love of the Almighty God, and I'll be quiet after till I die.

TIMMY—*shaking him.*— Will you whisht, I'm saying.

SAINT — *coming forward, centre.* — Are their minds troubled with joy, or is their sight uncertain, the way it does often be the day a person is restored?

TIMMY. It's too certain their sight is, holy father; and they're after making a great fight, because they're a pair of pitiful shows.

SAINT — *coming between them.* — May the Lord who has given you sight send a little sense into your heads, the way it won't be on your two selves you'll be looking — on two pitiful sinners of the earth — but on the splendour of the Spirit of God, you'll see an odd time shining out through the big hills, and steep streams falling to the sea. For if it's on the like of that you do be thinking, you'll not be minding the faces of men, but you'll be saying prayers and great praises, till you'll be living the way the great saints do be living, with little but old sacks, and skin covering their bones. (*To Timmy.*) Leave him go now, you're seeing he's quiet again. (*He frees Martin Doul.*) And let you (*he turns to Mary Doul*) not be raising your

voice, a bad thing in a woman; but let the lot of you, who have seen the power of the Lord, be thinking on it in the dark night, and be saying to yourselves it's great pity and love He has for the poor, starving people of Ireland. (*He gathers his cloak about him.*) And now the Lord send blessing to you all, for I am going on to Annagolan, where there is a deaf woman, and to Laragh, where there are two men without sense, and to Glenassil, where there are children blind from their birth; and then I'm going to sleep this night in the bed of the holy Kevin, and to be praising God, and asking great blessing on you all.

[*He bends his head.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

Village roadside, on left the door of a forge, with broken wheels, etc., lying about. A well near centre, with board above it, and room to pass behind it. Martin Doul is sitting near forge, cutting sticks.

TIMMY — *heard hammering inside forge, then calls.* — Let you make haste out there. . . . I'll be putting up new fires at the turn of day, and you haven't the half of them cut yet.

MARTIN DOUL — *gloomily.* — It's destroyed I'll be whacking your old thorns till the turn of day, and I with no food in my stomach would keep the life in a pig. (*He turns towards the door.*) Let you come out here and cut them yourself if you want them cut, for there's an hour every day when a man has a right to his rest.

TIMMY — *coming out, with a hammer, impatiently.* — Do you want me to be driving you off again to be walking the roads? There you are now, and I giving you your food, and a corner to sleep, and money with it; and, to hear the talk of you, you'd think I was after beating you, or stealing your gold.

MARTIN DOUL. You'd do it handy, maybe, if I'd gold to steal.

TIMMY — *throws down hammer; picks up some of the sticks already cut, and throws them into door.*) There's no fear of your having gold — a lazy, basking fool the like of you.

MARTIN DOUL. No fear, maybe, and I here with yourself, for it's more I got a while since and I sitting blinded in Grianan, than I get in this place working hard, and destroying myself, the length of the day.

TIMMY — *stopping with amazement.* — Working hard? (*He goes over to him.*) I'll teach you to work hard, Martin Doul. Strip off your coat now, and put a tuck in your sleeves, and cut the lot of them, while I'd rake the ashes from the forge, or I'll not put up with you another hour itself.

MARTIN DOUL — *horrified.* — Would you have me getting my death sitting out in the black wintry air with no coat on me at all?

TIMMY — *with authority.* — Strip it off now, or walk down upon the road.

MARTIN DOUL — *bitterly.* — Oh, God help me! (*He begins taking off his coat.*) I've heard tell you stripped the sheet from your wife and you putting her down into the

grave, and that there isn't the like of you for plucking your living ducks, the short days, and leaving them running round in their skins, in the great rains and the cold. (*He tucks up his sleeves.*) Ah, I've heard a power of queer things of yourself, and there isn't one of them I'll not believe from this day, and be telling to the boys.

TIMMY — *pulling over a big stick.*— Let you cut that now, and give me rest from your talk, for I'm not heeding you at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *taking stick.*— That's a hard, terrible stick, Timmy; and isn't it a poor thing to be cutting strong timber the like of that, when it's cold the bark is, and slippy with the frost of the air?

TIMMY — *gathering up another armful of sticks.*— What way wouldn't it be cold, and it freezing since the moon was changed?

[*He goes into forge.*

MARTIN DOUL — *querulously, as he cuts slowly.*— What way, indeed, Timmy? For it's a raw, beastly day we do have each day, till I do be thinking it's well for the blind don't be seeing them gray clouds driving on the hill, and don't be looking on people with their noses red, the like of your nose, and

their eyes weeping and watering, the like of your eyes, God help you, Timmy the smith.

TIMMY — *seen blinking in doorway.*— Is it turning now you are against your sight?

MARTIN DOUL — *very miserably.*— It's a hard thing for a man to have his sight, and he living near to the like of you (*he cuts a stick and throws it away*), or wed with a wife (*cuts a stick*); and I do be thinking it should be a hard thing for the Almighty God to be looking on the world, bad days, and on men the like of yourself walking around on it, and they slipping each way in the muck.

TIMMY — *with pot-hooks which he taps on anvil.*— You'd have a right to be minding, Martin Doul, for it's a power the Saint cured lose their sight after a while. Mary Doul's dimming again, I've heard them say; and I'm thinking the Lord, if he hears you making that talk, will have little pity left for you at all.

MARTIN DOUL. There's not a bit of fear of me losing my sight, and if it's a dark day itself it's too well I see every wicked wrinkle you have round by your eye.

TIMMY — *looking at him sharply.*— The day's not dark since the clouds broke in the east.

MARTIN DOUL. Let you not be tormenting yourself trying to make me afeard. You told me a power of bad lies the time I was blind, and it's right now for you to stop, and be taking your rest (*Mary Doul comes in unnoticed on right with a sack filled with green stuff on her arm*), for it's little ease or quiet any person would get if the big fools of Ireland weren't weary at times. (*He looks up and sees Mary Doul.*) Oh. glory be to God, she's coming again.

[*He begins to work busily with his back to her.*

TIMMY — *amused, to Mary Doul, as she is going by without looking at them.*— Look on him now, Mary Doul. You'd be a great one for keeping him steady at his work, for he's after idling and blathering to this hour from the dawn of day.

MARY DOUL — *stiffly.*— Of what is it you're speaking, Timmy the smith?

TIMMY — *laughing.*— Of himself, surely. Look on him there, and he with the shirt on him ripping from his back. You'd have a right to come round this night, I'm thinking, and put a stitch into his clothes, for it's long enough you are not speaking one to the other.

MARY DOUL. Let the two of you not torment me at all.

[*She goes out left, with her head in the air.*

MARTIN DOUL — *stops work and looks after her.*— Well, isn't it a queer thing she can't keep herself two days without looking on my face?

TIMMY — *jeeringly.*— Looking on your face is it? And she after going by with her head turned the way you'd see a priest going where there'd be a drunken man in the side ditch talking with a girl. (*Martin Doul gets up and goes to corner of forge, and looks out left.*) Come back here and don't mind her at all. Come back here, I'm saying, you've no call to be spying behind her since she went off, and left you, in place of breaking her heart, trying to keep you in the decency of clothes and food.

MARTIN DOUL — *crying out indignantly.*— You know rightly, Timmy, it was myself drove her away.

TIMMY. That's a lie you're telling, yet it's little I care which one of you was driving the other, and let you walk back here, I'm saying, to your work.

MARTIN DOUL — *turning round.*— I'm coming, surely.

[*He stops and looks out right, going a step or two towards centre.*

TIMMY. On what is it you're gaping, Martin Doul?

MARTIN DOUL. There's a person walking above. . . . It's Molly Byrne, I'm thinking, coming down with her can.

TIMMY. If she is itself let you not be idling this day, or minding her at all, and let you hurry with them sticks, for I'll want you in a short while to be blowing in the forge.

[*He throws down pot-hooks.*

MARTIN DOUL — *crying out.*— Is it roasting me now you'd be? (*Turns back and sees pot-hooks; he takes them up.*) Pot-hooks? Is it over them you've been inside sneezing and sweating since the dawn of day?

TIMMY — *resting himself on anvil, with satisfaction.*— I'm making a power of things you do have when you're settling with a wife, Martin Doul; for I heard tell last night the Saint'll be passing again in a short while, and I'd have him wed Molly with myself. . . . He'd do it, I've heard them say, for not a penny at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *lays down hooks and*

looks at him steadily.— Molly'll be saying great praises now to the Almighty God and He giving her a fine, stout, hardy man the like of you.

TIMMY — *uneasily.*— And why wouldn't she, if she's a fine woman itself?

MARTIN DOUL — *looking up right.*— Why wouldn't she, indeed, Timmy? . . . . The Almighty God's made a fine match in the two of you, for if you went marrying a woman was the like of yourself you'd be having the fearfullest little children, I'm thinking, was ever seen in the world.

TIMMY — *seriously offended.*— God forgive you! if you're an ugly man to be looking at, I'm thinking your tongue's worse than your view.

MARTIN DOUL — *hurt also.*— Isn't it destroyed with the cold I am, and if I'm ugly itself I never seen anyone the like of you for dreepiness this day, Timmy the smith, and I'm thinking now herself's coming above you'd have a right to step up into your old shanty, and give a rub to your face, and not be sitting there with your bleary eyes, and your big nose, the like of an old scarecrow stuck down upon the road.

TIMMY — *looking up the road uneasily.*—

She's no call to mind what way I look, and I after building a house with four rooms in it above on the hill. (*He stands up.*) But it's a queer thing the way yourself and Mary Doul are after setting every person in this place, and up beyond to Rathvanna, talking of nothing, and thinking of nothing, but the way they do be looking in the face. (*Going towards forge.*) It's the devil's work you're after doing with your talk of fine looks, and I'd do right, maybe, to step in and wash the blackness from my eyes.

[*He goes into forge. Martin Doul rubs his face furtively with the tail of his coat. Molly Byrne comes on right with a water-can, and begins to fill it at the well.*

MARTIN DOUL. God save you, Molly Byrne.

MOLLY BYRNE — *indifferently.*— God save you.

MARTIN DOUL. That's a dark, gloomy day, and the Lord have mercy on us all.

MOLLY BYRNE. Middling dark.

MARTIN DOUL. It's a power of dirty days, and dark mornings, and shabby-looking fellows (*he makes a gesture over his*

shoulder) we do have to be looking on when we have our sight, God help us, but there's one fine thing we have, to be looking on a grand, white, handsome girl, the like of you . . . . and every time I set my eyes on you I do be blessing the saints, and the holy water, and the power of the Lord Almighty in the heavens above.

MOLLY BYRNE. I've heard the priests say it isn't looking on a young girl would teach many to be saying their prayers.

[*Bailing water into her can with a cup.*

MARTIN DOUL. It isn't many have been the way I was, hearing your voice speaking, and not seeing you at all.

MOLLY BYRNE. That should have been a queer time for an old, wicked, coaxing fool to be sitting there with your eyes shut, and not seeing a sight of girl or woman passing the road.

MARTIN DOUL. If it was a queer time itself it was great joy and pride I had the time I'd hear your voice speaking and you passing to Grianan (*beginning to speak with plaintive intensity*), for it's of many a fine thing your voice would put a poor dark fellow in mind, and the day I'd hear it it's of little else at all I would be thinking.

MOLLY BYRNE. I'll tell your wife if you talk to me the like of that. . . . You've heard, maybe, she's below picking nettles for the widow O'Flinn, who took great pity on her when she seen the two of you fighting, and yourself putting shame on her at the crossing of the roads.

MARTIN DOUL — *impatiently.* — Is there no living person can speak a score of words to me, or say "God speed you," itself, without putting me in mind of the old woman, or that day either at Grianan?

MOLLY BYRNE — *maliciously.* — I was thinking it should be a fine thing to put you in mind of the day you called the grand day of your life.

MARTIN DOUL. Grand day, is it? (*Plaintively again, throwing aside his work, and leaning towards her.*) Or a bad black day when I was roused up and found I was the like of the little children do be listening to the stories of an old woman, and do be dreaming after in the dark night that it's in grand houses of gold they are, with speckled horses to ride, and do be waking again, in a short while, and they destroyed with the cold, and the thatch dripping, maybe, and the starved ass braying in the yard?

MOLLY BYRNE — *working indifferently.*— You've great romancing this day, Martin Doul. Was it up at the still you were at the fall of night?

MARTIN DOUL — *stands up, comes towards her, but stands at far (right) side of well.*— It was not, Molly Byrne, but lying down in a little rickety shed. . . . Lying down across a sop of straw, and I thinking I was seeing you walk, and hearing the sound of your step on a dry road, and hearing you again, and you laughing and making great talk in a high room with dry timber lining the roof. For it's a fine sound your voice has that time, and it's better I am, I'm thinking, lying down, the way a blind man does be lying, than to be sitting here in the gray light taking hard words of Timmy the smith.

MOLLY BYRNE — *looking at him with interest.*— It's queer talk you have if it's a little, old, shabby stump of a man you are itself.

MARTIN DOUL. I'm not so old as you do hear them say.

MOLLY BYRNE. You're old, I'm thinking, to be talking that talk with a girl.

MARTIN DOUL — *despondingly.*— It's not a lie you're telling, maybe, for it's long

years I'm after losing from the world, feeling love and talking love, with the old woman, and I fooled the whole while with the lies of Timmy the smith.

MOLLY BYRNE — *half invitingly.*—It's a fine way you're wanting to pay Timmy the smith. . . . And it's not his *lies* you're making love to this day, Martin Doul.

MARTIN DOUL. It is not, Molly, and the Lord forgive us all. (*He passes behind her and comes near her left.*) For I've heard tell there are lands beyond in Cahir Iveraghig and the Reeks of Cork with warm sun in them, and fine light in the sky. (*Bending towards her.*) And light's a grand thing for a man ever was blind, or a woman, with a fine neck, and a skin on her the like of you, the way we'd have a right to go off this day till we'd have a fine life passing abroad through them towns of the south, and we telling stories, maybe, or singing songs at the fairs.

MOLLY BYRNE — *turning round half amused, and looking him over from head to foot.*— Well, isn't it a queer thing when your own wife's after leaving you because you're a pitiful show, you'd talk the like of that to me?

MARTIN DOUL — *drawing back a little, hurt, but indignant.* — It's a queer thing, maybe, for all things is queer in the world. (*In a low voice with peculiar emphasis.*) But there's one thing I'm telling you, if she walked off away from me, it wasn't because of seeing me, and I no more than I am, but because I was looking on her with my two eyes, and she getting up, and eating her food, and combing her hair, and lying down for her sleep.

MOLLY BYRNE — *interested, off her guard.* — Wouldn't any married man you'd have be doing the like of that?

MARTIN DOUL — *seizing the moment that he has her attention.* — I'm thinking by the mercy of God it's few sees anything but them is blind for a space (*with excitement.*) It's a few sees the old woman rotting for the grave, and it's few sees the like of yourself. (*He bends over her.*) Though it's shining you are, like a high lamp would drag in the ships out of the sea.

MOLLY BYRNE — *shrinking away from him.* — Keep off from me, Martin Doul.

MARTIN DOUL — *quickly, with low, furious intensity.* — It's the truth I'm telling you. (*He puts his hand on her shoulder and shakes her.*) And you'd do right not to

marry a man is after looking out a long while on the bad days of the world; for what way would the like of him have fit eyes to look on yourself, when you rise up in the morning and come out of the little door you have above in the lane, the time it'd be a fine thing if a man would be seeing, and losing his sight, the way he'd have your two eyes facing him, and he going the roads, and shining above him, and he looking in the sky, and springing up from the earth, the time he'd lower his head, in place of the muck that seeing men do meet all roads spread on the world.

MOLLY BYRNE — *who has listened half mesmerized, starting away.*— It's the like of that talk you'd hear from a man would be losing his mind.

MARTIN DOUL — *going after her, passing to her right.*— It'd be little wonder if a man near the like of you would be losing his mind. Put down your can now, and come along with myself, for I'm seeing you this day, seeing you, maybe, the way no man has seen you in the world. (*He takes her by the arm and trys to pull her away softly to the right.*) Let you come on now, I'm saying, to the lands of Iveragh and the Reeks of Cork, where you won't set down the width of your

two feet and not be crushing fine flowers, and making sweet smells in the air.

MOLLY BYRNE — *laying down the can; trying to free herself.*— Leave me go, Martin Doul! Leave me go, I'm saying!

MARTIN DOUL. Let you not be fooling. Come along now the little path through the trees.

MOLLY BYRNE — *crying out towards forge.*— Timmy — T i m m y t h e s m i t h. (*Timmy comes out of forge, and Martin Doul lets her go. Molly Byrne, excited and breathless, pointing to Martin Doul.*) Did ever you hear that them that loses their sight loses their senses along with it, Timmy the smith!

TIMMY — *suspicious, but uncertain.* — He's no sense, surely, and he'll be having himself driven off this day from where he's good sleeping, and feeding, and wages for his work.

MOLLY BYRNE — *as before.*— He's a bigger fool than that, Timmy. Look on him now, and tell me if that isn't a grand fellow to think he's only to open his mouth to have a fine woman, the like of me, running along by his heels.

[*Martin Doul recoils towards centre, with his hand to his eyes; Mary Doul is seen on left coming forward softly.*

TIMMY — *with blank amazement.* — Oh, the blind is wicked people, and it's no lie. But he'll walk off this day and not be troubling us more.

[*Turns back left and picks up Martin Doul's coat and stick; some things fall out of coat pocket, which he gathers up again.*

MARTIN DOUL — *turns around, sees Mary Doul, whispers to Molly Byrne with imploring agony.* — Let you not put shame on me, Molly, before herself and the smith. Let you not put shame on me and I after saying fine words to you, and dreaming . . . dreams . . . . in the night. (*He hesitates, and looks round the sky.*) Is it a storm of thunder is coming, or the last end of the world? (*He staggers towards Mary Doul, tripping slightly over tin can.*) The heavens is closing, I'm thinking, with darkness and great trouble passing in the sky. (*He reaches Mary Doul, and seizes her left arm with both his hands — with a frantic cry.*) Is it darkness of thunder is coming, Mary Doul! Do you see me clearly with your eyes?

MARY DOUL — *snatches her arm away, and hits him with empty sack across the face.*

— I see you a sight too clearly, and let you keep off from me now.

MOLLY BYRNE — *clapping her hands.* — That's right, Mary. That's the way to treat the like of him is after standing there at my feet and asking me to go off with him, till I'd grow an old wretched road-woman the like of yourself.

MARY DOUL — *defiantly.* — When the skin shrinks on your chin, Molly Byrne, there won't be the like of you for a shrunk hag in the four quarters of Ireland. . . . It's a fine pair you'd be, surely!

[*Martin Doul is standing at back right centre, with his back to the audience.*

TIMMY — *coming over to Mary Doul.* — Is it no shame you have to let on she'd ever be the like of you?

MARY DOUL. It's them that's fat and flabby do be wrinkled young, and that whitish yellowy hair she has does be soon turning the like of a handful of thin grass you'd see rotting, where the wet lies, at the north of a sty. (*Turning to go out on right.*) Ah, it's a better thing to have a simple, seemly face, the like of my face, for two-score years, or fifty itself, than to be setting fools mad a short

while, and then to be turning a thing would drive off the little children from your feet.

[*She goes out; Martin Doul has come forward again, mastering himself, but uncertain.*

TIMMY. Oh, God protect us, Molly, from the words of the blind. (*He throws down Martin Doul's coat and stick.*) There's your old rubbish now, Martin Doul, and let you take it up, for it's all you have, and walk off through the world, for if ever I meet you coming again, if it's seeing or blind you are itself, I'll bring out the big hammer and hit you a welt with it will leave you easy till the judgment day.

MARTIN DOUL — *rousing himself with an effort.*— What call have you to talk the like of that with myself?

TIMMY — *pointing to Molly Byrne.*— It's well you know what call I have. It's well you know a decent girl, I'm thinking to wed, has no right to have her heart scalded with hearing talk — and queer, bad talk, I'm thinking — from a raggy-looking fool the like of you.

MARTIN DOUL — *raising his voice.*— It's making game of you she is, for what see-

ing girl would marry with yourself? Look on him, Molly, look on him, I'm saying, for I'm seeing him still, and let you raise your voice, for the time is come, and bid him go up into his forge, and be sitting there by himself, sneezing and sweating, and he beating pot-hooks till the judgment day.

[*He seizes her arm again.*

MOLLY BYRNE. Keep him off from me, Timmy!

TIMMY — *pushing Martin Doul aside.*— Would you have me strike you, Martin Doul? Go along now after your wife, who's a fit match for you, and leave Molly with myself.

MARTIN DOUL — *despairingly.*— Won't you raise your voice, Molly, and lay hell's long curse on his tongue?

MOLLY BYRNE — *on Timmy's left.*— I'll be telling him it's destroyed I am with the sight of you and the sound of your voice. Go off now after your wife, and if she beats you again, let you go after the tinker girls is above running the hills, or down among the sluts of the town, and you'll learn one day, maybe, the way a man should speak with a well-reared, civil girl the like of me. (*She takes Timmy by the arm.*) Come up now into the forge till he'll be gone down a bit on the road,

for it's near afeard I am of the wild look he has come in his eyes.

[*She goes into the forge. Timmy stops in the doorway.*

TIMMY. Let me not find you out here again, Martin Doul. (*He bares his arm.*) It's well you know Timmy the smith has great strength in his arm, and it's a power of things it has broken a sight harder than the old bone of your skull.

[*He goes into the forge and pulls the door after him.*

MARTIN DOUL — *stands a moment with his hand to his eyes.*— And that's the last thing I'm to set my sight on in the life of the world — the villainy of a woman and the bloody strength of a man. Oh, God, pity a poor, blind fellow, the way I am this day with no strength in me to do hurt to them at all. (*He begins groping about for a moment, then stops.*) Yet if I've no strength in me I've a voice left for my prayers, and may God blight them this day, and my own soul the same hour with them, the way I'll see them after, Molly Byrne and Timmy the smith, the two of them on a high bed, and they screeching in hell. . . It'll be a grand thing that

time to look on the two of them; and they twisting and roaring out, and twisting and roaring again, one day and the next day, and each day always and ever. It's not blind I'll be that time, and it won't be hell to me, I'm thinking, but the like of heaven itself; and it's fine care I'll be taking the Lord Almighty doesn't know.

[*He turns to grope out.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

The same Scene as in first Act, but gap in centre has been filled with briars, or branches of some sort. Mary Doul, blind again, gropes her way in on left, and sits as before. She has a few rushes with her. It is an early spring day.

MARY DOUL — *mournfully.* — Ah, God help me . . . God help me; the blackness wasn't so black at all the other time as it is this time, and it's destroyed I'll be now, and hard set to get my living working alone, when it's few are passing and the winds are cold. (*She begins shredding rushes.*) I'm thinking short days will be long days to me from this time, and I sitting here, not seeing a blink, or hearing a word, and no thought in my mind but long prayers that Martin Doul'll get his reward in a short while for the villainy of his heart. It's great jokes the people'll be making now, I'm thinking, and they pass me by, pointing their fingers maybe, and asking what place is himself, the way it's no quiet or decency I'll have from this day till I'm an old woman with long white hair and it twisting from my brow. (*She fumbles with her*

hair, and then seems to hear something. Listens for a moment.) There's a queer, slouching step coming on the road. . . . God help me, he's coming surely.

[*She stays perfectly quiet. Martin Doul gropes in on right, blind also.*

MARTIN DOUL — *gloomily.*— The devil mend Mary Doul for putting lies on me, and letting on she was grand. The devil mend the old Saint for letting me see it was lies. (*He sits down near her.*) The devil mend Timmy the smith for killing me with hard work, and keeping me with an empty, windy stomach in me, in the day and in the night. Ten thousand devils mend the soul of Molly Byrne — (*Mary Doul nods her head with approval*) — and the bad, wicked souls is hidden in all the women of the world. (*He rocks himself, with his hand over his face.*) It's lonesome I'll be from this day, and if living people is a bad lot, yet Mary Doul, herself, and she a dirty, wrinkled-looking hag, was better maybe to be sitting along with than no one at all. I'll be getting my death now, I'm thinking, sitting alone in the cold air, hearing the night coming, and the blackbirds flying round in the briars crying to themselves, the time you'll

hear one cart getting off a long way in the east, and another cart getting off a long way in the west, and a dog barking maybe, and a little wind turning the sticks. (*He listens and sighs heavily.*) I'll be destroyed sitting alone and losing my senses this time the way I'm after losing my sight, for it'd make any person afeard to be sitting up hearing the sound of his breath — (*he moves his feet on the stones*) — and the noise of his feet, when it's a power of queer things do be stirring, little sticks breaking, and the grass moving — (*Mary Doul half sighs, and he turns on her in horror*) — till you'd take your dying oath on sun and moon a thing was breathing on the stones. (*He listens towards her for a moment, then starts up nervously, and gropes about for his stick.*) I'll be going now, I'm thinking, but I'm not sure what place my stick's in, and I'm destroyed with terror and dread. (*He touches her face as he is groping about and cries out.*) There's a thing with a cold, living face on it sitting up at my side. (*He turns to run away, but misses his path and stumbles in against the wall.*) My road is lost on me now! Oh, merciful God, set my foot on the path this day, and I'll be saying prayers morning and night, and not straining

my ear after young girls, or doing any bad thing till I die ——.

MARY DOUL — *indignantly.* — Let you not be telling lies to the Almighty God.

MARTIN DOUL. Mary Doul, is it? (*Recovering himself with immense relief.*) Is it Mary Doul, I'm saying?

MARY DOUL. There's a sweet tone in your voice I've not heard for a space. You're taking me for Molly Byrne, I'm thinking.

MARTIN DOUL — *coming towards her, wiping sweat from his face.* — Well, sight's a queer thing for upsetting a man. It's a queer thing to think I'd live to this day to be fearing the like of you; but if it's shaken I am for a short while, I'll soon be coming to myself.

MARY DOUL. You'll be grand then, and it's no lie.

MARTIN DOUL — *sitting down shyly, some way off.* — You've no call to be talking, for I've heard tell you're as blind as myself.

MARY DOUL. If I am I'm bearing in mind I'm married to a little dark stump of a fellow looks the fool of the world, and I'll be bearing in mind from this day the great hullabuloo he's after making from hearing a poor woman breathing quiet in her place.

MARTIN DOUL. And you'll be bearing in mind, I'm thinking, what you seen a while back when you looked down into a well, or a clear pool, maybe, when there was no wind stirring and a good light in the sky.

MARY DOUL. I'm minding that surely, for if I'm not the way the liars were saying below I seen a thing in them pools put joy and blessing in my heart.

[*She puts her hand to her hair again.*

MARTIN DOUL — *laughing ironically.* — Well, they were saying below I was losing my senses, but I never went any day the length of that. . . . God help you, Mary Doul, if you're not a wonder for looks, you're the maddest female woman is walking the counties of the east.

MARY DOUL — *scornfully.* — You were saying all times you'd a great ear for hearing the lies of the world. A great ear, God help you, and you think you're using it now.

MARTIN DOUL. If it's not lies you're telling would you have me think you're not a wrinkled poor woman is looking like three scores, or two scores and a half!

MARY DOUL. I would not, Martin. (*She leans forward earnestly.*) For when I seen myself in them pools, I seen my hair

would be gray or white, maybe, in a short while, and I seen with it that I'd a face would be a great wonder when it'll have soft white hair falling around it, the way when I'm an old woman there won't be the like of me surely in the seven counties of the east.

MARTIN DOUL — *with real admiration.* — You're a cute thinking woman, Mary Doul, and it's no lie.

MARY DOUL — *triumphantly.* — I am, surely, and I'm telling you a beautiful white-haired woman is a grand thing to see, for I'm told when Kitty Bawn was selling poteen below, the young men itself would never tire to be looking in her face.

MARTIN DOUL — *taking off his hat and feeling his head, speaking with hesitation.* — Did you think to look, Mary Doul, would there be a whiteness the like of that coming upon me?

MARY DOUL — *with extreme contempt.* — On you, God help you! . . . In a short while you'll have a head on you as bald as an old turnip you'd see rolling round in the muck. You need never talk again of your fine looks, Martin Doul, for the day of that talk's gone for ever.

MARTIN DOUL. That's a hard word to

be saying, for I was thinking if I'd a bit of comfort, the like of yourself, it's not far off we'd be from the good days went before, and that'd be a wonder surely. But I'll never rest easy, thinking you're a gray, beautiful woman, and myself a pitiful show.

MARY DOUL. I can't help your looks, Martin Doul. It wasn't myself made you with your rat's eyes, and your big ears, and your griseldy chin.

MARTIN DOUL — *rubs his chin ruefully, then beams with delight.* — There's one thing you've forgot, if you're a cute thinking woman itself.

MARY DOUL. Your slouching feet, is it? Or your hooky neck, or your two knees is black with knocking one on the other?

MARTIN DOUL — *with delighted scorn.* — There's talking for a cute woman. There's talking, surely!

MARY DOUL — *puzzled at joy of his voice.* — If you'd anything but lies to say you'd be talking to yourself.

MARTIN DOUL — *bursting with excitement.* — I've this to say, Mary Doul. I'll be letting my beard grow in a short while, a beautiful, long, white, silken, streamy beard, you wouldn't see the like of in the eastern

world. . . . Ah, a white beard's a grand thing on an old man, a grand thing for making the quality stop and be stretching out their hands with good silver or gold, and a beard's a thing you'll never have, so you may be holding your tongue.

MARY DOUL — *laughing cheerfully.*— Well, we're a great pair, surely, and it's great times we'll have yet, maybe, and great talking before we die.

MARTIN DOUL. Great times from this day, with the help of the Almighty God, for a priest itself would believe the lies of an old man would have a fine white beard growing on his chin.

MARY DOUL. There's the sound of one of them twittering yellow birds do be coming in the spring-time from beyond the sea, and there'll be a fine warmth now in the sun, and a sweetness in the air, the way it'll be a grand thing to be sitting here quiet and easy smelling the things growing up, and budding from the earth.

MARTIN DOUL. I'm smelling the furze a while back sprouting on the hill, and if you'd hold your tongue you'd hear the lambs of Grianan, though it's near drowned their cry-

ing is with the full river making noises in the glen.

MARY DOUL — *listens.* — The lambs is bleating, surely, and there's cocks and laying hens making a fine stir a mile off on the face of the hill. (*She starts.*)

MARTIN DOUL. What's that is sounding in the west?

[*A faint sound of a bell is heard.*

MARY DOUL. It's not the churches, for the wind's blowing from the sea.

MARTIN DOUL — *with dismay.* — It's the old Saint, I'm thinking, ringing his bell.

MARY DOUL. The Lord protect us from the saints of God! (*They listen.*) He's coming this road, surely.

MARTIN DOUL — *tentatively.*— Will we be running off, Mary Doul?

MARY DOUL. What place would we run?

MARTIN DOUL. There's the little path going up through the sloughs. . . . If we reached the bank above, where the elders do be growing, no person would see a sight of us, if it was a hundred yeomen were passing itself; but I'm afeard after the time we were with our sight we'll not find our way to it at all.

MARY DOUL — *standing up.* — You'd find the way, surely. You're a grand man the world knows at finding your way winter or summer, if there was deep snow in it itself, or thick grass and leaves, maybe, growing from the earth.

MARTIN DOUL — *taking her hand.* — Come a bit this way; it's here it begins. (*They grope about gap.*) There's a tree pulled into the gap, or a strange thing happened, since I was passing it before.

MARY DOUL. Would we have a right to be crawling in below under the sticks?

MARTIN DOUL. It's hard set I am to know what would be right. And isn't it a poor thing to be blind when you can't run off itself, and you fearing to see?

MARY DOUL — *nearly in tears.* — It's a poor thing, God help us, and what good'll our gray hairs be itself, if we have our sight, the way we'll see them falling each day, and turning dirty in the rain?

[*The bell sounds nearby.*

MARTIN DOUL — *in despair.* — He's coming now, and we won't get off from him at all.

MARY DOUL. Could we hide in the bit

of a briar is growing at the west butt of the church?

MARTIN DOUL. We'll try that, surely. (*He listens a moment.*) Let you make haste; I hear them trampling in the wood.

[*They grope over to church.*

MARY DOUL. It's the words of the young girls making a great stir in the trees. (*They find the bush.*) Here's the briar on my left, Martin; I'll go in first, I'm the big one, and I'm easy to see.

MARTIN DOUL — *turning his head anxiously.*— It's easy heard you are; and will you be holding your tongue?

MARY DOUL — *partly behind bush.*— Come in now beside of me. (*They kneel down, still clearly visible.*) Do you think they can see us now, Martin Doul?

MARTIN DOUL. I'm thinking they can't, but I'm hard set to know; for the lot of them young girls, the devil save them, have sharp, terrible eyes, would pick out a poor man, I'm thinking, and he lying below hid in his grave.

MARY DOUL. Let you not be whispering sin, Martin Doul, or maybe it's the finger of God they'd see pointing to ourselves.

MARTIN DOUL. It's yourself is speak-

ing madness, Mary Doul; haven't you heard the Saint say it's the wicked do be blind?

MARY DOUL. If it is you'd have a right to speak a big, terrible word would make the water not cure us at all.

MARTIN DOUL. What way would I find a big, terrible word, and I shook with the fear; and if I did itself, who'd know rightly if it's good words or bad would save us this day from himself?

MARY DOUL. They're coming. I hear their feet on the stones.

[*The Saint comes in on right, with Timmy and Molly Byrne in holiday clothes, the others as before.*

TIMMY. I've heard tell Martin Doul and Mary Doul were seen this day about on the road, holy father, and we were thinking you'd have pity on them and cure them again.

SAINT. I would, maybe, but where are they at all? I have little time left when I have the two of you wed in the church.

MAT SIMON — *at their seat.* — There are the rushes they do have lying round on the stones. It's not far off they'll be, surely.

MOLLY BYRNE — *pointing with astonishment.* — Look beyond, Timmy.

[*They all look over and see Martin Doul.*

TIMMY. Well, Martin's a lazy fellow to be lying in there at the height of the day. (*He goes over shouting.*) Let you get up out of that. You were near losing a great chance by your sleepiness this day, Martin Doul. . . . The two of them's in it, God help us all!

MARTIN DOUL — *scrambling up with Mary Doul.* — What is it you want, Timmy, that you can't leave us in peace?

TIMMY. The Saint's come to marry the two of us, and I'm after speaking a word for yourselves, the way he'll be curing you now; for if you're a foolish man itself, I do be pitying you, for I've a kind heart, when I think of you sitting dark again, and you after seeing a while and working for your bread.

[*Martin Doul takes Mary Doul's hand and tries to grope his way off right; he has lost his hat, and they are both covered with dust and grass seeds.*

PEOPLE. You're going wrong. It's this way, Martin Doul.

[*They push him over in front of the Saint, near centre. Martin Doul and Mary Doul stand with piteous hang-dog dejection.*

SAINT. Let you not be afeard, for there's great pity with the Lord.

MARTIN DOUL. We aren't afeard, holy father.

SAINT. It's many a time those that are cured with the well of the four beauties of God lose their sight when a time is gone, but those I cure a second time go on seeing till the hour of death. (*He takes the cover from his can.*) I've a few drops only left of the water, but, with the help of God, it'll be enough for the two of you, and let you kneel down now upon the road.

[*Martin Doul wheels round with Mary Doul and tries to get away.*

SAINT. You can kneel down here, I'm saying, we'll not trouble this time going to the church.

TIMMY — *turning Martin Doul round, angrily.*— Are you going mad in your head, Martin Doul? It's here you're to kneel. Did you not hear his reverence, and he speaking to you now?

SAINT. Kneel down, I'm saying, the ground's dry at your feet.

MARTIN DOUL — *with distress.*— Let you go on your own way, holy father. We're not calling you at all.

SAINT. I'm not saying a word of penance, or fasting itself, for I'm thinking the Lord has brought you great teaching in the blindness of your eyes; so you've no call now to be fearing me, but let you kneel down till I give you your sight.

MARTIN DOUL — *more troubled.*— We're not asking our sight, holy father, and let you walk on your own way, and be fasting, or praying, or doing anything that you will, but leave us here in our peace, at the crossing of the roads, for it's best we are this way, and we're not asking to see.

SAINT — *to the People.*— Is his mind gone that he's no wish to be cured this day, or to be living or working, or looking on the wonders of the world?

MARTIN DOUL. It's wonders enough I seen in a short space for the life of one man only.

SAINT — *severely.*— I never heard tell of any person wouldn't have great joy to be looking on the earth, and the image of the Lord thrown upon men.

MARTIN DOUL — *raising his voice.*— Them is great sights, holy father. . . . What was it I seen when I first opened my eyes but

your own bleeding feet, and they cut with the stones? That was a great sight, maybe, of the image of God. . . . And what was it I seen my last day but the villainy of hell looking out from the eyes of the girl you're coming to marry — the Lord forgive you — with Timmy the smith. That was a great sight, maybe. And wasn't it great sights I seen on the roads when the north winds would be driving, and the skies would be harsh, till you'd see the horses and the asses, and the dogs itself, maybe, with their heads hanging, and they closing their eyes ——.

SAINT. And did you never hear tell of the summer, and the fine spring, and the places where the holy men of Ireland have built up churches to the Lord? No man isn't a madman, I'm thinking, would be talking the like of that, and wishing to be closed up and seeing no sight of the grand glittering seas, and the furze that is opening above, and will soon have the hills shining as if it was fine creels of gold they were, rising to the sky.

MARTIN DOUL. Is it talking now you are of Knock and Ballavore? Ah, it's ourselves had finer sights than the like of them, I'm telling you, when we were sitting a while back hearing the birds and bees humming in

every weed of the ditch, or when we'd be smelling the sweet, beautiful smell does be rising in the warm nights, when you do hear the swift flying things racing in the air, till we'd be looking up in our own minds into a grand sky, and seeing lakes, and big rivers, and fine hills for taking the plough.

SAINT — *to People.*— There's little use talking with the like of him.

MOLLY BYRNE. It's lazy he is, holy father, and not wanting to work; for a while before you had him cured he was always talking, and wishing, and longing for his sight.

MARTIN DOUL — *turning on her.*— I was longing, surely, for sight; but I seen my fill in a short while with the look of my wife, and the look of yourself, Molly Byrne, when you'd the queer wicked grin in your eyes you do have the time you're making game with a man.

MOLLY BYRNE. Let you not mind him, holy father; for it's bad things he was saying to me a while back — bad things for a married man, your reverence — and you'd do right surely to leave him in darkness, if it's that is best fitting the villainy of his heart.

TIMMY — *to Saint.*— Would you cure Mary Doul, your reverence, who is a quiet

poor woman, never did hurt to any, or said a hard word, saving only when she'd be vexed with himself, or with young girls would be making game of her below?

SAINT — *to Mary Doul.* — If you have any sense, Mary, kneel down at my feet, and I'll bring the sight again into your eyes.

MARTIN DOUL — *more defiantly.* — You will not, holy father. Would you have her looking on me, and saying hard words to me, till the hour of death?

SAINT — *severely.* — If she's wanting her sight I wouldn't have the like of you stop her at all. (*To Mary Doul.*) Kneel down, I'm saying.

MARY DOUL — *doubtfully.* — Let us be as we are, holy father, and then we'll be known again in a short while as the people is happy and blind, and be having an easy time, with no trouble to live, and we getting halfpence on the road.

MOLLY BYRNE. Let you not be a raving fool, Mary Doul. Kneel down now, and let him give you your sight, and himself can be sitting here if he likes it best, and taking halfpence on the road.

TIMMY. That's the truth, Mary; and if it's choosing a wilful blindness you are, I'm

thinking there isn't anyone in this place will ever be giving you a hand's turn or a hap'orth of meal, or be doing the little things you need to keep you at all living in the world.

MAT SIMON. If you had your sight, Mary, you could be walking up for him and down with him, and be stitching his clothes, and keeping a watch on him day and night the way no other woman would come near him at all.

MARY DOUL — *half persuaded.*— That's the truth, maybe ——.

SAINT. Kneel down now, I'm saying, for it's in haste I am to be going on with the marriage and be walking my own way before the fall of night.

THE PEOPLE. Kneel down, Mary! Kneel down when you're bid by the Saint!

MARY DOUL — *looking uneasily towards Martin Doul.*— Maybe it's right they are, and I will if you wish it, holy father.

[*She kneels down. The Saint takes off his hat and gives it to some one near him. All the men take off their hats. He goes forward a step to take Martin Doul's hand away from Mary Doul.*

SAINT — *to Martin Doul.*— Go aside now; we're not wanting you here.

MARTIN DOUL — *pushes him away roughly, and stands with his left hand on Mary Doul's shoulder.*— Keep off yourself, holy father, and let you not be taking my rest from me in the darkness of my wife. . . . What call has the like of you to be coming between married people — that you're not understanding at all — and be making a great mess with the holy water you have, and the length of your prayers? Go on now, I'm saying, and leave us here on the road.

SAINT. If it was a seeing man I heard talking to me the like of that I'd put a black curse on him would weigh down his soul till it'd be falling to hell; but you're a poor blind sinner, God forgive you, and I don't mind you at all. (*He raises his can.*) Go aside now till I give the blessing to your wife, and if you won't go with your own will, there are those standing by will make you, surely.

MARTIN DOUL — *pulling Mary Doul.*— Come along now, and don't mind him at all.

SAINT — *imperiously, to the People.*— Let you take that man and drive him down upon the road.

[*Some men seize Martin Doul.*

MARTIN DOUL — *struggling and shouting.*— Make them leave me go, holy father!

Make them leave me go, I'm saying, and you may cure her this day, or do anything that you will.

SAINT — *to People.*— Let him be. . . . . Let him be if his sense is come to him at all.

MARTIN DOUL — *shakes himself loose, feels for Mary Doul, sinking his voice to a plausible whine.*— You may cure herself, surely, holy father; I wouldn't stop you at all — and it's great joy she'll have looking on your face — but let you cure myself along with her, the way I'll see when it's lies she's telling, and be looking out day and night upon the holy men of God.

[*He kneels down a little before Mary Doul.*

SAINT — *speaking half to the People.*— Men who are dark a long while and thinking over queer thoughts in their heads, aren't the like of simple men, who do be working every day, and praying, and living like ourselves; so if he has found a right mind at the last minute itself, I'll cure him, if the Lord will, and not be thinking of the hard, foolish words he's after saying this day to us all.

MARTIN DOUL — *listening eagerly.*— I'm waiting now, holy father.

SAINT — *with can in his hand, close to*

Martin Doul.— With the power of the water from the grave of the four beauties of God, with the power of this water, I'm saying, that I put upon your eyes ——.

[*He raises can.*

MARTIN DOUL — *with a sudden movement strikes the can from the Saint's hand and sends it rocketing across stage. He stands up; People murmur loudly.*— If I'm a poor dark sinner I've sharp ears, God help me, and have left you with a big head on you and it's well I heard the little splash of the water you had there in the can. Go on now, holy father, for if you're a fine Saint itself, it's more sense is in a blind man, and more power maybe than you're thinking at all. Let you walk on now with your worn feet, and your welted knees, and your fasting, holy ways a thin pitiful arm. (*The Saint looks at him for a moment severely, then turns away and picks up his can. He pulls Mary Doul up.*) For if it's a right some of you have to be working and sweating the like of Timmy the smith, and a right some of you have to be fasting and praying and talking holy talk the like of yourself, I'm thinking it's a good right ourselves have to be sitting blind, hearing a soft wind turning round the little leaves of the spring and feeling the sun, and we not

tormenting our souls with the sight of the gray days, and the holy men, and the dirty feet is trampling the world.

[*He gropes towards his stone with Mary Doul.*

MAT SIMON. It'd be an unlucky fearful thing, I'm thinking, to have the like of that man living near us at all in the townland of Grianan. Wouldn't he bring down a curse upon us, holy father, from the heavens of God?

SAINT — *tying his girdle.* — God has great mercy, but great wrath for them that sin.

THE PEOPLE. Go on now, Martin Doul. Go on from this place. Let you not be bringing great storms or droughts on us maybe from the power of the Lord.

[*Some of them throw things at him.*

MARTIN DOUL — *turning round defiantly and picking up a stone.* — Keep off now, the yelping lot of you, or it's more than one maybe will get a bloody head on him with the pitch of my stone. Keep off now, and let you not be afeard; for we're going on the two of us to the towns of the south, where the people will have kind voices maybe, and we won't know their bad looks or their villainy at all. (*He takes Mary Doul's hand*

again.) Come along now and we'll be walking to the south, for we've seen too much of everyone in this place, and it's small joy we'd have living near them, or hearing the lies they do be telling from the gray of dawn till the night.

MARY DOUL — *despondingly.*— That's the truth, surely; and we'd have a right to be gone, if it's a long way itself, as I've heard them say, where you do have to be walking with a slough of wet on the one side and a slough of wet on the other, and you going a stony path with a north wind blowing behind. [*They go out.*

TIMMY. There's a power of deep rivers with floods in them where you do have to be lepping the stones and you going to the south, so I'm thinking the two of them will be drowned together in a short while, surely.

SAINT. They have chosen their lot, and the Lord have mercy on their souls. (*He rings his bell.*) And let the two of you come up now into the church, Molly Byrne and Timmy the smith, till I make your marriage and put my blessing on you all.

[*He turns to the church; procession forms, and the curtain comes down, as they go slowly into the church.*

THE TINKER'S WEDDING

PREFACE.

THE drama is made serious — in the French sense of the word — not by the degree in which it is taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, but by the degree in which it gives the nourishment, not very easy to define, on which our imaginations live. We should not go to the theatre as we go to a chemist's, or a dram-shop, but as we go to a dinner, where the food we need is taken with pleasure and excitement. This was nearly always so in Spain and England and France when the drama was at its richest — the infancy and decay of the drama tend to be didactic — but in these days the playhouse is too often stocked with the drugs of many

seedy problems, or with the absinthe or vermouth of the last musical comedy.

The drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything. Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopœia of Galen,—look at Ibsen and the Germans — but the best plays of Ben Jonson and Molière can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges.

Of the things which nourish the imagination humour is one of the most needful, and it is dangerous to limit or destroy it. Baudelaire calls laughter the greatest sign of the Satanic element in man; and where a country loses its humor, as some towns in Ireland are doing, there will be morbidity of mind, as Baudelaire's mind was morbid.

In the greater part of Ireland, however, the whole people, from the tinkers to the clergy, have still a life, and view of life, that

are rich and genial and humorous. I do not think that these country people, who have so much humor themselves, will mind being laughed at without malice, as the people in every country have been laughed at in their own comedies.

J. M. S.

December 2nd, 1907.

PERSONS

MICHAEL BYRNE, a tinker.
MARY BYRNE, an old woman, his mother.
SARAH CASEY, a young tinker woman.
A PRIEST.

THE TINKER'S WEDDING

ACT I.

SCENE: *A Village roadside after nightfall. A fire of sticks is burning near the ditch a little to the right. Michael is working beside it. In the background, on the left, a sort of tent and ragged clothes drying on the hedge. On the right a chapel-gate.*

SARAH CASEY — *coming in on right, eagerly.*— We'll see his reverence this place, Michael Byrne, and he passing backward to his house to-night.

MICHAEL — *grimly.*— That'll be a sacred and a sainted joy!

SARAH — *sharply.*— It'll be small joy for yourself if you aren't ready with my wedding ring. (*She goes over to him.*) Is it near done this time, or what way is it at all?

MICHAEL. A poor way only, Sarah Casey, for it's the divil's job making a ring, and you'll be having my hands destroyed in a short while the way I'll not be able to make a tin can at all maybe at the dawn of day.

SARAH — *sitting down beside him and throwing sticks on the fire.*— If it's the divil's

job, let you mind it, and leave your speeches that would choke a fool.

MICHAEL — *slowly and glumly.*— And it's you'll go talking of fools, Sarah Casey, when no man did ever hear a lying story even of your like unto this mortal day. You to be going beside me a great while, and rearing a lot of them, and then to be setting off with your talk of getting married, and your driving me to it, and I not asking it at all.

[*Sarah turns her back to him and arranges something in the ditch.*

MICHAEL — *angrily.*— Can't you speak a word when I'm asking what is it ails you since the moon did change?

SARAH — *musingly.*— I'm thinking there isn't anything ails me, Michael Byrne; but the spring-time is a queer time, and its queer thoughts maybe I do think at whiles.

MICHAEL. It's hard set you'd be to think queerer than welcome, Sarah Casey; but what will you gain dragging me to the priest this night, I'm saying, when it's new thoughts you'll be thinking at the dawn of day?

SARAH — *teasingly.*— It's at the dawn of day I do be thinking I'd have a right to be going off to the rich tinker's do be travelling from Tibradden to the Tara Hill; for it'd be a fine life to be driving with young Jaunting

Jim, where there wouldn't be any big hills to break the back of you, with walking up and walking down.

MICHAEL — *with dismay.*— It's the like of that you do be thinking!

SARAH. The like of that, Michael Byrne, when there is a bit of sun in it, and a kind air, and a great smell coming from the thorn trees is above your head.

MICHAEL — *looks at her for a moment with horror, and then hands her the ring.*— Will that fit you now?

SARAH — *trying it on.*— It's making it tight you are, and the edges sharp on the tin.

MICHAEL — *looking at it carefully.*— It's the fat of your own finger, Sarah Casey; and isn't it a mad thing I'm saying again that you'd be asking marriage of me, or making a talk of going away from me, and you thriving and getting your good health by the grace of the Almighty God?

SARAH — *giving it back to him.*— Fix it now, and it'll do, if you're wary you don't squeeze it again.

MICHAEL — *moodily, working again.*— It's easy saying be wary; there's many things easy said, Sarah Casey, you'd wonder a fool even would be saying at all. (*He starts vio-*

lently.) The divil mend you, I'm scalded again!

SARAH — *scornfully.*— If you are, it's a clumsy man you are this night, Michael Byrne (*raising her voice*); and let you make haste now, or herself will be coming with the porter.

MICHAEL — *defiantly, raising his voice.* Let me make haste? I'll be making haste maybe to hit you a great clout; for I'm thinking it's the like of that you want. I'm thinking on the day I got you above at Rathvanna, and the way you began crying out and we coming down off the hill, crying out and saying, "I'll go back to my ma," and I'm thinking on the way I came behind you that time, and hit you a great clout in the lug, and how quiet and easy it was you came along with me from that hour to this present day.

SARAH — *standing up and throwing all her sticks into the fire.*— And a big fool I was too, maybe; but we'll be seeing Jaunting Jim to-morrow in Ballinaclash, and he after getting a great price for his white foal in the horse-fair of Wicklow, the way it'll be a great sight to see him squandering his share of gold, and he with a grand eye for a fine horse, and a grand eye for a woman.

MICHAEL — *working again with impa-*

tience.— The divil do him good with the two of them.

SARAH — *kicking up the ashes with her foot.*— Ah, he's a great lad, I'm telling you, and it's proud and happy I'll be to see him, and he the first one called me the Beauty of Ballinacree, a fine name for a woman.

MICHAEL — *with contempt.*— It's the like of that name they do be putting on the horses they have below racing in Arklow. It's easy pleased you are, Sarah Casey, easy pleased with a big word, or the liar speaks it.

SARAH. Liar!

MICHAEL. Liar, surely.

SARAH — *indignantly.*— Liar, is it? Didn't you ever hear tell of the peelers followed me ten miles along the Glen Malure, and they talking love to me in the dark night, or of the children you'll meet coming from school and they saying one to the other, "It's this day we seen Sarah Casey, the Beauty of Ballinacree, a great sight surely."

MICHAEL. God help the lot of them!

SARAH. It's yourself you'll be calling God to help, in two weeks or three, when you'll be waking up in the dark night and thinking you see me coming with the sun on me, and I driving a high cart with Jaunting

Jim going behind. It's lonesome and cold you'll be feeling the ditch where you'll be lying down that night, I'm telling you, and you hearing the old woman making a great noise in her sleep, and the bats squeaking in the trees.

MICHAEL. Whist. I hear some one coming the road.

SARAH — *looking out right.*— It's some one coming forward from the doctor's door.

MICHAEL. It's often his reverence does be in there playing cards, or drinking a sup, or singing songs, until the dawn of day.

SARAH. It's a big boast of a man with a long step on him and a trumpeting voice. It's his reverence surely; and if you have the ring done, it's a great bargain we'll make now and he after drinking his glass.

MICHAEL — *going to her and giving her the ring.*— There's your ring, Sarah Casey; but I'm thinking he'll walk by and not stop to speak with the like of us at all.

SARAH — *tidying herself, in great excitement.*— Let you be sitting here and keeping a great blaze, the way he can look on my face; and let you seem to be working, for it's great love the like of him have to talk of work.

MICHAEL — *moodily, sitting down and*

beginning to work at a tin can.— Great love surely.

SARAH — *eagerly.*—Make a great blaze now, Michael Byrne.

[*The priest comes in on right; she comes forward in front of him.*

SARAH — *in a very plausible voice.*— Good evening, your reverence. It's a grand fine night, by the grace of God.

PRIEST. The Lord have mercy on us! What kind of a living woman is it that you are at all?

SARAH. It's Sarah Casey I am, your reverence, the Beauty of Ballinacree, and it's Michael Byrne is below in the ditch.

PRIEST. A holy pair, surely! Let you get out of my way. [*He tries to pass by.*

SARAH — *keeping in front of him.*— We are wanting a little word with your reverence.

PRIEST. I haven't a halfpenny at all. Leave the road I'm saying.

SARAH. It isn't a halfpenny we're asking, holy father; but we were thinking maybe we'd have a right to be getting married; and we were thinking it's yourself would marry us for not a halfpenny at all; for you're a kind man, your reverence, a kind man with the poor.

PRIEST — *with astonishment.*— Is it marry you for nothing at all?

SARAH. It is, your reverence; and we were thinking maybe you'd give us a little small bit of silver to pay for the ring.

PRIEST — *loudly.*— Let you hold your tongue; let you be quiet, Sarah Casey. I've no silver at all for the like of you; and if you want to be married, let you pay your pound. I'd do it for a pound only, and that's making it a sight cheaper than I'd make it for one of my own pairs is living here in the place.

SARAH. Where would the like of us get a pound, your reverence?

PRIEST. Wouldn't you easy get it with your selling asses, and making cans, and your stealing east and west in Wicklow and Wexford and the county Meath? (*He tries to pass her.*) Let you leave the road, and not be plaguing me more.

SARAH — *pleadingly, taking money from her pocket.*— Wouldn't you have a little mercy on us, your reverence? (*Holding out money.*) Wouldn't you marry us for a half a sovereign, and it a nice shiny one with a view on it of the living king's mamma?

PRIEST. If it's ten shillings you have, let you get ten more the same way, and I'll marry you then.

SARAH — *whining.*— It's two years we are getting that bit, your reverence, with our pence and our halfpence and an odd three-penny bit; and if you don't marry us now, himself and the old woman, who has a great drouth, will be drinking it to-morrow in the fair (*she puts her apron to her eyes, half sobbing*), and then I won't be married any time, and I'll be saying till I'm an old woman: "It's a cruel and a wicked thing to be bred poor."

PRIEST — *turning up towards the fire.*— Let you not be crying, Sarah Casey. It's a queer woman you are to be crying at the like of that, and you your whole life walking the roads.

SARAH — *sobbing.*— It's two years we are getting the gold, your reverence, and now you won't marry us for that bit, and we hard-working poor people do be making cans in the dark night, and blinding our eyes with the black smoke from the bits of twigs we do be burning.

[*An old woman is heard singing tipsily on the left.*

PRIEST — *looking at the can Michael is making.*— When will you have that can done, Michael Byrne?

MICHAEL. In a short space only, your

reverence, for I'm putting the last dab of solder on the rim.

PRIEST. Let you get a crown along with the ten shillings and the gallon can, Sarah Casey, and I will wed you so.

MARY — *suddenly shouting behind, tipsily.*— Larry was a fine lad, I'm saying; Larry was a fine lad, Sarah Casey ——

MICHAEL. Whist, now, the two of you. There's my mother coming, and she'd have us destroyed if she heard the like of that talk the time she's been drinking her fill.

MARY — *comes in singing* —

And when we asked him what way he'd die,
And he hanging unrepented,
" Begob," says Larry, " that's all in my eye,
By the clergy first invented."

SARAH. Give me the jug now, or you'll have it spilt in the ditch.

MARY — *holding the jug with both her hands, in a stilted voice.*— Let you leave me easy, Sarah Casey. I won't spill it, I'm saying. God help you; are you thinking it's frothing full to the brim it is at this hour of the night, and I after carrying it in my two hands a long step from Jemmy Neill's?

MICHAEL — *anxiously.*— Is there a sup left at all?

SARAH — *looking into the jug.*— A little small sup only I'm thinking.

MARY — *sees the priest, and holds out jug towards him.*— God save your reverence. I'm after bringing down a smart drop; and let you drink it up now, for it's a middling drouthy man you are at all times, God forgive you, and this night is cruel dry.

[*She tries to go towards him. Sarah holds her back.*

PRIEST — *waving her away.*— Let you not be falling to the flames. Keep off, I'm saying.

MARY — *persuasively.*— Let you not be shy of us, your reverence. Aren't we all sinners, God help us! Drink a sup now, I'm telling you; and we won't let on a word about it till the Judgment Day.

[*She takes up a tin mug, pours some porter into it, and gives it to him.*

MARY — *singing, and holding the jug in her hand* —

A lonesome ditch in Ballygan
The day you're beating a tenpenny can;
A lonesome bank in Ballyduff
The time . . . [*She breaks off.*

It's a bad, wicked song, Sarah Casey; and let you put me down now in the ditch, and I won't sing it till himself will be gone; for

it's bad enough he is, I'm thinking, without ourselves making him worse.

SARAH — *putting her down, to the priest, half laughing.*— Don't mind her at all, your reverence. She's no shame the time she's a drop taken; and if it was the Holy Father from Rome was in it, she'd give him a little sup out of her mug, and say the same as she'd say to yourself.

MARY — *to the priest.*— Let you drink it up, holy father. Let you drink it up, I'm saying, and not be letting on you wouldn't do the like of it, and you with a stack of pint bottles above, reaching the sky.

PRIEST — *with resignation.*— Well, here's to your good health, and God forgive us all.

[*He drinks.*

MARY. That's right now, your reverence, and the blessing of God be on you. Isn't it a grand thing to see you sitting down, with no pride in you, and drinking a sup with the like of us, and we the poorest, wretched, starving creatures you'd see any place on the earth?

PRIEST. If it's starving you are itself, I'm thinking it's well for the like of you that do be drinking when there's drouth on you, and lying down to sleep when your legs are stiff. (*He sighs gloomily.*) What would

you do if it was the like of myself you were, saying Mass with your mouth dry, and running east and west for a sick call maybe, and hearing the rural people again and they saying their sins?

MARY — *with compassion.*— It's destroyed you must be hearing the sins of the rural people on a fine spring.

PRIEST — *with despondency.*— It's a hard life, I'm telling you, a hard life, Mary Byrne; and there's the bishop coming in the morning, and he an old man, would have you destroyed if he seen a thing at all.

MARY — *with great sympathy.* — It'd break my heart to hear you talking and sighing the like of that, your reverence. (*She pats him on the knee.*) Let you rouse up, now, if it's a poor, single man you are itself, and I'll be singing you songs unto the dawn of day.

PRIEST — *interrupting her.*— What is it I want with your songs when it'd be better for the like of you, that'll soon die, to be down on your two knees saying prayers to the Almighty God?

MARY. If it's prayers I want, you'd have a right to say one yourself, holy father; for we don't have them at all, and I've heard tell a power of times it's that you're for. Say

one now, your reverence, for I've heard a power of queer things and I walking the world, but there's one thing I never heard any time, and that's a real priest saying a prayer.

PRIEST. The Lord protect us!

MARY. It's no lie, holy father. I often heard the rural people making a queer noise and they going to rest; but who'd mind the like of them? And I'm thinking it should be great game to hear a scholar, the like of you, speaking Latin to the saints above.

PRIEST — *scandalized.*— Stop your talking, Mary Byrne; you're an old flagrant heathen, and I'll stay no more with the lot of you. [*He rises.*

MARY — *catching hold of him.*— Stop till you say a prayer, your reverence; stop till you say a little prayer, I'm telling you, and I'll give you my blessing and the last sup from the jug.

PRIEST — *breaking away.*— Leave me go, Mary Byrne; for I have never met your like for hard abominations the score and two years I'm living in the place.

MARY — *innocently.*—Is that the truth?

PRIEST.— It is, then, and God have mercy on your soul.

[*The priest goes towards the left, and Sarah follows him.*

SARAH — *in a low voice.*— And what time will you do the thing I'm asking, holy father? for I'm thinking you'll do it surely, and not have me growing into an old, wicked heathen like herself.

MARY — *calling out shrilly.*— Let you be walking back here, Sarah Casey, and not be talking whisper-talk with the like of him in the face of the Almighty God.

SARAH — *to the priest.*— Do you hear her now, your reverence? Isn't it true, surely, she's an old, flagrant heathen, would destroy the world?

PRIEST — *to Sarah, moving off.*— Well, I'll be coming down early to the chapel, and let you come to me a while after you see me passing, and bring the bit of gold along with you, and the tin can. I'll marry you for them two, though it's a pitiful small sum; for I wouldn't be easy in my soul if I left you growing into an old, wicked heathen the like of her.

SARAH — *following him out.*— The blessing of the Almighty God be on you, holy father, and that He may reward and watch you from this present day.

MARY — *nudging Michael.*— Did you see that, Michael Byrne? Didn't you hear me telling you she's flighty a while back since the change of the moon? With her fussing for

marriage, and she making whisper-talk with one man or another man along by the road.

MICHAEL.— Whist now, or she'll knock the head of you the time she comes back.

MARY.— Ah, it's a bad, wicked way the world is this night, if there's a fine air in it itself. You'd never have seen me, and I a young woman, making whisper-talk with the like of him, and he the fearfullest old fellow you'd see any place walking the world.

[*Sarah comes back quickly.*

MARY — *calling out to her.*— What is it you're after whispering above with himself?

SARAH — *exultingly.*— Lie down, and leave us in peace. *She whispers with Michael.*

MARY — *poking out her pipe with a straw, sings* —

She'd whisper with one, and she'd whisper with two——

She breaks off coughing.— My singing voice is gone for this night, Sarah Casey. (*She lights her pipe.*) But if it's flighty you are itself, you're a grand handsome woman, the glory of tinkers, the pride of Wicklow, the Beauty of Ballinacree. I wouldn't have you lying down and you lonesome to sleep this night in a dark ditch when the spring is coming in the trees; so let you sit down there by the big bough, and I'll be telling you the finest

story you'd hear any place from Dundalk to Ballinacree, with great queens in it, making themselves matches from the start to the end, and they with shiny silks on them the length of the day, and white shifts for the night.

MICHAEL — *standing up with the tin can in his hand.*— Let you go asleep, and not have us destroyed.

MARY — *lying back sleepily.*— Don't mind him, Sarah Casey. Sit down now, and I'll be telling you a story would be fit to tell a woman the like of you in the springtime of the year.

SARAH — *taking the can from Michael, and tying it up in a piece of sacking.*— That'll not be rusting now in the dews of night. I'll put it up in the ditch the way it will be handy in the morning; and now we've that done, Michael Byrne, I'll go along with you and welcome for Tim Flaherty's hens.

[*She puts the can in the ditch.*

MARY — *sleepily.*— I've a grand story of the great queens of Ireland with white necks on them the like of Sarah Casey, and fine arms would hit you a slap the way Sarah Casey would hit you.

SARAH — *beckoning on the left.*— Come along now, Michael, while she's falling asleep.

[*He goes towards left. Mary sees that they are going, starts up suddenly, and turns over on her hands and knees.*

MARY — *piteously.*— Where is it you're going? Let you walk back here, and not be leaving me lonesome when the night is fine.

SARAH. Don't be waking the world with your talk when we're going up through the back wood to get two of Tim Flaherty's hens are roosting in the ash-tree above at the well.

MARY. And it's leaving me lone you are? Come back here, Sarah Casey. Come back here, I'm saying; or if it's off you must go, leave me the two little coppers you have, the way I can walk up in a short while, and get another pint for my sleep.

SARAH. It's too much you have taken. Let you stretch yourself out and take a long sleep; for isn't that the best thing any woman can do, and she an old drinking heathen like yourself.

[*She and Michael go out left.*

MARY — *standing up slowly.*— It's gone they are, and I with my feet that weak under me you'd knock me down with a rush, and my head with a noise in it the like of what

you'd hear in a stream and it running between two rocks and rain falling. (*She goes over to the ditch where the can is tied in sacking, and takes it down.*) What good am I this night, God help me? What good are the grand stories I have when it's few would listen to an old woman, few but a girl maybe would be in great fear the time her hour was come, or a little child wouldn't be sleeping with the hunger on a cold night? (*She takes the can from the sacking and fits in three empty bottles and straw in its place, and ties them up.*) Maybe the two of them have a good right to be walking out the little short while they'd be young; but if they have itself, they'll not keep Mary Byrne from her full pint when the night's fine, and there's a dry moon in the sky. (*She takes up the can, and puts the package back in the ditch.*) Jemmy Neill's a decent lad; and he'll give me a good drop for the can; and maybe if I keep near the peelers to-morrow for the first bit of the fair, herself won't strike me at all; and if she does itself, what's a little stroke on your head beside sitting lonesome on a fine night, hearing the

dogs barking, and the bats squeaking, and you saying over, it's a short while only till you die.

[*She goes out singing "The night before Larry was stretched."*

CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE: *The same. Early morning. Sarah is washing her face in an old bucket; then plaits her hair. Michael is tidying himself also. Mary Byrne is asleep against the ditch.*

SARAH — *to Michael, with pleased excitement.*—Go over, now, to the bundle beyond, and you'll find a kind of a red handkerchief to put upon your neck, and a green one for myself.

MICHAEL — *getting them.*— You're after spending more money on the like of them. Well, it's a power we're losing this time, and we not gaining a thing at all. (*With the handkerchief.*) Is it them two?

SARAH. It is, Michael. (*She takes one of them.*) Let you tackle that one round under your chin; and let you not forget to take your hat from your head when we go up into the church. I asked Biddy Flynn below, that's after marrying her second man, and she told me it's the like of that they do.

[*Mary yawns, and turns over in her sleep.*

SARAH — *with anxiety.*— There she is waking up on us, and I thinking we'd have the job done before she'd know of it at all.

MICHAEL. She'll be crying out now, and making game of us, and saying it's fools we are surely.

SARAH. I'll send her to sleep again, or get her out of it one way or another; for it'd be a bad case to have a divil's scholar the like of her turning the priest against us maybe with her godless talk.

MARY — *waking up, and looking at them with curiosity, blandly.*— That's fine things you have on you, Sarah Casey; and it's a great stir you're making this day, washing your face. I'm that used to the hammer, I wouldn't hear it at all, but washing is a rare thing, and you're after waking me up, and I having a great sleep in the sun.

[*She looks around cautiously at the bundle in which she has hidden the bottles.*

SARAH — *coaxingly.*— Let you stretch out again for a sleep, Mary Byrne, for it'll be a middling time yet before we go to the fair.

MARY — *with suspicion.*— That's a sweet tongue you have, Sarah Casey; but if sleep's a grand thing, it's a grand thing to be waking up a day the like of this, when there's a warm sun in it, and a kind air, and you'll hear the

cuckoos singing and crying out on the top of the hills.

SARAH. If it's that gay you are, you'd have a right to walk down and see would you get a few halfpence from the rich men do be driving early to the fair.

MARY. When rich men do be driving early, it's queer tempers they have, the Lord forgive them; the way it's little but bad words and swearing out you'd get from them all.

SARAH — *losing her temper and breaking out fiercely.*— Then if you'll neither beg nor sleep, let you walk off from this place where you're not wanted, and not have us waiting for you maybe at the turn of day.

MARY — *rather uneasy, turning to Michael.*— God help our spirits, Michael; there she is again rousing cranky from the break of dawn. Oh! isn't she a terror since the moon did change (*she gets up slowly*)? And I'd best be going forward to sell the gallon can.

[*She goes over and takes up the bundle.*

SARAH — *crying out angrily.*— Leave that down, Mary Byrne. Oh! aren't you the scorn of women to think that you'd have that drouth and roguery on you that you'd go drinking the can and the dew not dried from the grass?

MARY — *in a feigned tone of pacification, with the bundle still in her hand.*— It's not a drouth but a heartburn I have this day, Sarah Casey, so I'm going down to cool my gullet at the blessed well; and I'll sell the can to the parson's daughter below, a harmless poor creature would fill your hand with shillings for a brace of lies.

SARAH. Leave down the tin can, Mary Byrne, for I hear the drouth upon your tongue to-day.

MARY. There's not a drink-house from this place to the fair, Sarah Casey; the way you'll find me below with the full price, and not a farthing gone.

[*She turns to go off left.*

SARAH — *jumping up, and picking up the hammer threateningly.*— Put down that can, I'm saying.

MARY — *looking at her for a moment in terror, and putting down the bundle in the ditch.*— Is it raving mad you're going, Sarah Casey, and you the pride of women to destroy the world?

SARAH — *going up to her, and giving her a push off left.*— I'll show you if it's raving mad I am. Go on from this place, I'm saying, and be wary now.

MARY — *turning back after her.*— If I

go, I'll be telling old and young you're a weathered heathen savage, Sarah Casey, the one did put down a head of the parson's cabbage to boil in the pot with your clothes (*the priest comes in behind her, on the left, and listens*), and quenched the flaming candles on the throne of God the time your shadow fell within the pillars of the chapel door.

[*Sarah turns on her, and she springs round nearly into the Priest's arms. When she sees him, she claps her shawl over her mouth, and goes up towards the ditch, laughing to herself.*

PRIEST — *going to Sarah, half terrified at the language that he has heard.*— Well, aren't you a fearful lot? I'm thinking it's only humbug you were making at the fall of night, and you won't need me at all.

SARAH — *with anger still in her voice.*— Humbug is it! would you be turning back upon your spoken promise in the face of God?

PRIEST — *dubiously.*— I'm thinking you were never christened, Sarah Casey; and it would be a queer job to go dealing Christian sacraments unto the like of you. (*Persuasively feeling in his pocket.*) So it would be best, maybe, I'd give you a shilling for to drink my health, and let you walk on, and not trouble me at all.

SARAH. That's your talking, is it? If you don't stand to your spoken word, holy father, I'll make my own complaint to the mitred bishop in the face of all.

PRIEST. You'd do that!

SARAH. I would surely, holy father, if I walked to the city of Dublin with blood and blisters on my naked feet.

PRIEST — *uneasily scratching his ear.*— I wish this day was done, Sarah Casey; for I'm thinking it's a risky thing getting mixed up in any matters with the like of you.

SARAH. Be hast·· then, and you'll have us done with before you'd think at all.

PRIEST — *giving in.*— Well, maybe it's right you are, and let you come up to the chapel when you see me looking from the door.

[*He goes up into the chapel.*

SARAH — *calling after him.*— We will, and God preserve you, holy father.

MARY — *coming down to them, speaking with amazement and consternation, but without anger.*— Going to the chapel! It's at marriage you're fooling again, maybe? (*Sarah turns her back on her.*) It was for that you were washing your face, and you after sending me for porter at the fall of night the way I'd drink a good half from the jug? (*Going*

round in front of Sarah.) Is it at marriage you're fooling again?

SARAH — *triumphantly.*— It is, Mary Byrne. I'll be married now in a short while; and from this day there will no one have a right to call me a dirty name and I selling cans in Wicklow or Wexford or the city of Dublin itself.

MARY — *turning to Michael.*— And it's yourself is wedding her, Michael Byrne?

MICHAEL — *gloomily.*— It is, God spare us.

MARY — *looks at Sarah for a moment, and then bursts out into a laugh of derision.*— Well, she's a tight, hardy girl, and it's no lie; but I never knew till this day it was a black born fool I had for a son. You'll breed asses, I've heard them say, and poaching dogs, and horses'd go licking the wind, but it's a hard thing, God help me, to breed sense in a son.

MICHAEL — *gloomily.*— If I didn't marry her, she'd be walking off to Jaunting Jim maybe at the fall of night; and it's well yourself knows there isn't the like of her for getting money and selling songs to the men.

MARY. And you're thinking it's paying gold to his reverence would make a woman stop when she's a mind to go?

SARAH — *angrily.*— Let you not be de-

stroying us with your talk when I've as good a right to a decent marriage as any speckled female does be sleeping in the black hovels above, would choke a mule.

MARY — *soothingly.*— It's as good a right you have surely, Sarah Casey, but what good will it do? Is it putting that ring on your finger will keep you from getting an aged woman and losing the fine face you have, or be easing your pains, when it's the grand ladies do be married in silk dresses, with rings of gold, that do pass any woman with their share of torment in the hour of birth, and do be paying the doctors in the city of Dublin a great price at that time, the like of what you'd pay for a good ass and a cart?

[*She sits down.*

SARAH — *puzzled.*— Is that the truth?

MARY — *pleased with the point she has made.*— Wouldn't any know it's the truth? Ah, it's a few short years you are yet in the world, Sarah Casey, and it's little or nothing at all maybe you know about it.

SARAH — *vehement but uneasy.*— What is it yourself knows of the fine ladies when they wouldn't let the like of you go near them at all?

MARY. If you do be drinking a little sup in one town and another town, it's soon you

get great knowledge and a great sight into the world. You'll see men there, and women there, sitting up on the ends of barrels in the dark night, and they making great talk would soon have the like of you, Sarah Casey, as wise as a March hare.

MICHAEL — *to Sarah.*— That's the truth she's saying, and maybe if you've sense in you at all, you'd have a right still to leave your fooling, and not be wasting our gold.

SARAH — *decisively.*— If it's wise or fool I am, I've made a good bargain and I'll stand to it now.

MARY. What is it he's making you give?

MICHAEL. The ten shillings in gold, and the tin can is above tied in the sack.

MARY — *looking at the bundle with surprise and dread.*— The bit of gold and the tin can, is it?

MICHAEL. The half a sovereign, and the gallon can.

MARY — *scrambling to her feet quickly.*— Well, I think I'll be walking off the road to the fair the way you won't be destroying me going too fast on the hills. (*She goes a few steps towards the left, then turns and speaks to Sarah very persuasively.*— Let you not take the can from the sack, Sarah Casey; for the people is coming above would be making game

of you, and pointing their fingers if they seen you do the like of that. Let you leave it safe in the bag, I'm saying, Sarah darling. It's that way will be best.

[*She goes towards left, and pauses for a moment, looking about her with embarrassment.*

MICHAEL — *in a low voice.*— What ails her at all?

SARAH — *anxiously.*— It's real wicked she does be when you hear her speaking as easy as that.

MARY — *to herself.*— I'd be safer in the chapel, I'm thinking; for if she caught me after on the road, maybe she would kill me then.

[*She comes hobbling back towards the right.*

SARAH. Where is it you're going? It isn't that way we'll be walking to the fair.

MARY. I'm going up into the chapel to give you my blessing and hear the priest saying his prayers. It's a lonesome road is running below to Greenane, and a woman would never know the things might happen her and she walking single in a lonesome place.

[*As she reaches the chapel-gate, the Priest comes to it in his surplice.*

PRIEST — *crying out.*— Come along now.

It is the whole day you'd keep me here saying my prayers, and I getting my death with not a bit in my stomach, and my breakfast in ruins, and the Lord Bishop maybe driving on the road to-day?

SARAH. We're coming now, holy father.

PRIEST. Give me the bit of gold into my hand.

SARAH. It's here, holy father.

[*She gives it to him. Michael takes the bundle from the ditch and brings it over, standing a little behind Sarah. He feels the bundle, and looks at Mary with a meaning look.*

PRIEST — *looking at the gold.* — It's a good one, I'm thinking, wherever you got it. And where is the can?

SARAH — *taking the bundle.* — We have it here in a bit of clean sack, your reverence. We tied it up in the inside of that to keep it from rusting in the dews of night, and let you not open it now or you'll have the people making game of us and telling the story on us, east and west to the butt of the hills.

PRIEST — *taking the bundle.* — Give it here into my hand, Sarah Casey. What is it any person would think of a tinker making a can. [*He begins opening the bundle.*

SARAH. It's a fine can, your reverence.

for if it's poor simple people we are, it's fine cans we can make, and himself, God help him, is a great man surely at the trade.

[*Priest opens the bundle; the three empty bottles fall out.*

SARAH. Glory to the saints of joy!

PRIEST. Did ever any man see the like of that? To think you'd be putting deceit on me, and telling lies to me, and I going to marry you for a little sum wouldn't marry a child.

SARAH — *crestfallen and astonished.*— It's the divil did it, your reverence, and I wouldn't tell you a lie. (*Raising her hands.*) May the Lord Almighty strike me dead if the divil isn't after hooshing the tin can from the bag.

PRIEST — *vehemently.*— Go along now, and don't be swearing your lies. Go along now, and let you not be thinking I'm big fool enough to believe the like of that, when it's after selling it you are or making a swap for drink of it, maybe, in the darkness of the night.

MARY — *in a peacemaking voice, putting her hand on the Priest's left arm.*— She wouldn't do the like of that, your reverence, when she hasn't a decent standing drouth on her at all; and she's setting great store on her marriage the way you'd have a right to be

taking her easy, and not minding the can. What differ would an empty can make with a fine, rich, hardy man the like of you?

SARAH — *imploringly.*— Marry us, your reverence, for the ten shillings in gold, and we'll make you a grand can in the evening — a can would be fit to carry water for the holy man of God. Marry us now and I'll be saying fine prayers for you, morning and night, if it'd be raining itself, and it'd be in two black pools I'd be setting my knees.

PRIEST — *loudly.*— It's a wicked, thieving, lying, scheming lot you are, the pack of you. Let you walk off now and take every stinking rag you have there from the ditch.

MARY — *putting her shawl over her head.* Marry her, your reverence, for the love of God, for there'll be queer doings below if you send her off the like of that and she swearing crazy on the road.

SARAH — *angrily.*— It's the truth she's saying; for it's herself, I'm thinking, is after swapping the tin can for a pint, the time she was raging mad with the drouth, and ourselves above walking the hill.

MARY — *crying out with indignation.*— Have you no shame, Sarah Casey, to tell lies unto a holy man?

SARAH — *to Mary, working herself into*

a rage.— It's making game of me you'd be, and putting a fool's head on me in the face of the world; but if you were thinking to be mighty cute walking off, or going up to hide in the church, I've got you this time, and you'll not run from me now.

[*She seizes up one of the bottles.*

MARY — *hiding behind the priest.*— Keep her off, your reverence, keep her off for the love of the Almighty God. What at all would the Lord Bishop say if he found me here lying with my head broken across, or the two of yous maybe digging a bloody grave for me at the door of the church?

PRIEST — *waving Sarah off.*— Go along, Sarah Casey. Would you be doing murder at my feet? Go along from me now, and wasn't I a big fool to have to do with you when it's nothing but distraction and torment I get from the kindness of my heart?

SARAH — *shouting.*— I've bet a power of strong lads east and west through the world, and are you thinking I'd turn back from a priest? Leave the road now, or maybe I would strike yourself.

PRIEST. You would not, Sarah Casey. I've no fear for the lot of you; but let you walk off, I'm saying, and not be coming where

you've no business, and screeching tumult and murder at the doorway of the church.

SARAH. I'll not go a step till I have her head broke, or till I'm wed with himself. If you want to get shut of us, let you marry us now, for I'm thinking the ten shillings in gold is a good price for the like of you, and you near burst with the fat.

PRIEST. I wouldn't have you coming in on me and soiling my church; for there's nothing at all, I'm thinking, would keep the like of you from hell. (*He throws down the ten shillings on the ground.*) Gather up your gold now, and begone from my sight, for if ever I set an eye on you again you'll hear me telling the peelers who it was stole the black ass belonging to Philly O'Cullen, and whose hay it is the grey ass does be eating.

SARAH. You'd do that?

PRIEST. I would, surely.

SARAH. If you do, you'll be getting all the tinkers from Wicklow and Wexford, and the County Meath, to put up block tin in the place of glass to shield your windows where you do be looking out and blinking at the girls. It's hard set you'll be that time, I'm telling you, to fill the depth of your belly the long days of Lent; for we wouldn't leave a laying pullet in your yard at all.

PRIEST — *losing his temper finally.*— Go on, now, or I'll send the Lords of Justice a dated story of your villainies — burning, stealing, robbing, raping to this mortal day. Go on now, I'm saying, if you'd run from Kilmainham or the rope itself.

MICHAEL — *taking off his coat.*— Is it run from the like of you, holy father? Go up to your own shanty, or I'll beat you with the ass's reins till the world would hear you roaring from this place to the coast of Clare.

PRIEST. Is it lift your hand upon myself when the Lord would blight your members if you'd touch me now? Go on from this.

[*He gives him a shove.*

MICHAEL. Blight me is it? Take it then, your reverence, and God help you so.

[*He runs at him with the reins.*

PRIEST — *runs up to ditch crying out.*— There are the peelers passing by the grace of God —— hey, below!

MARY — *clapping her hand over his mouth.*— Knock him down on the road; they didn't hear him at all.

[*Michael pulls him down.*

SARAH. Gag his jaws.

MARY. Stuff the sacking in his teeth.

[*They gag him with the sack that had the can in it.*

SARAH. Tie the bag around his head, and if the peelers come, we'll put him head-first in the boghole is beyond the ditch.

[*They tie him up in some sacking.*

MICHAEL — *to Mary.*— Keep him quiet, and the rags tight on him for fear he'd screech. (*He goes back to their camp.*) Hurry with the things, Sarah Casey. The peelers aren't coming this way, and maybe we'll get off from them now.

[*They bundle the things together in wild haste, the priest wriggling and struggling about on the ground, with old Mary trying to keep him quiet.*

MARY — *patting his head.*— Be quiet, your reverence. What is it ails you, with your wrigglings now? Is it choking maybe? (*She puts her hand under the sack, and feels his mouth, patting him on the back.*) It's only letting on you are, holy father, for your nose is blowing back and forward as easy as an east wind on an April day. (*In a soothing voice.*) There now, holy father, let you stay easy, I'm telling you, and learn a little sense and patience, the way you'll not be so airy again going to rob poor sinners of their scraps of gold. (*He gets quieter.*) That's a good boy you are now, your reverence, and let you not be uneasy, for we wouldn't hurt you at

all. It's sick and sorry we are to tease you; but what did you want meddling with the like of us, when it's a long time we are going our own ways — father and son, and his son after him, or mother and daughter, and her own daughter again — and it's little need we ever had of going up into a church and swearing — I'm told there's swearing with it — a word no man would believe, or with drawing rings on our fingers, would be cutting our skins maybe when we'd be taking the ass from the shafts, and pulling the straps the time they'd be slippy with going around beneath the heavens in rains falling.

MICHAEL — *who has finished bundling up the things, comes over to Sarah.* — We're fixed now; and I have a mind to run him in a boghole the way he'll not be tattling to the peelers of our games to-day.

SARAH. You'd have a right too, I'm thinking.

MARY — *soothingly.* — Let you not be rough with him, Sarah Casey, and he after drinking his sup of porter with us at the fall of night. Maybe he'd swear a mighty oath he wouldn't harm us, and then we'd safer loose him; for if we went to drown him, they'd maybe hang the batch of us, man and child and woman, and the ass itself.

MICHAEL. What would he care for an oath?

MARY. Don't you know his like do live in terror of the wrath of God? (*Putting her mouth to the Priest's ear in the sacking.*) Would you swear an oath, holy father, to leave us in our freedom, and not talk at all? (*Priest nods in sacking.*) Didn't I tell you? Look at the poor fellow nodding his head off in the bias of the sacks. Strip them off from him, and he'll be easy now.

MICHAEL — *as if speaking to a horse.*— Hold up, holy father.

[*He pulls the sacking off, and shows the priest with his hair on end. They free his mouth.*

MARY. Hold him till he swears.

PRIEST — *in a faint voice.*— I swear surely. If you let me go in peace, I'll not inform against you or say a thing at all, and may God forgive me for giving heed unto your like to-day.

SARAH — *puts the ring on his finger.*— There's the ring, holy father, to keep you minding of your oath until the end of time; for my heart's scalded with your fooling; and it'll be a long day till I go making talk of marriage or the like of that.

MARY — *complacently, standing up slow-*

ly.— She's vexed now, your reverence; and let you not mind her at all, for she's right surely, and it's little need we ever had of the like of you to get us our bit to eat, and our bit to drink, and our time of love when we were young men and women, and were fine to look at.

MICHAEL. Hurry on now. He's a great man to have kept us from fooling our gold; and we'll have a great time drinking that bit with the trampers on the green of Clash.

[*They gather up their things. The priest stands up.*

PRIEST — *lifting up his hand.*— I've sworn not to call the hand of man upon your crimes to-day; but I haven't sworn I wouldn't call the fire of heaven from the hand of the Almighty God.

[*He begins saying a Latin malediction in a loud ecclesiastical voice.*

MARY. There's an old villain.

ALL — *together.*— Run, run. Run for your lives.

[*They rush out, leaving the Priest master of the situation.*

CURTAIN

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